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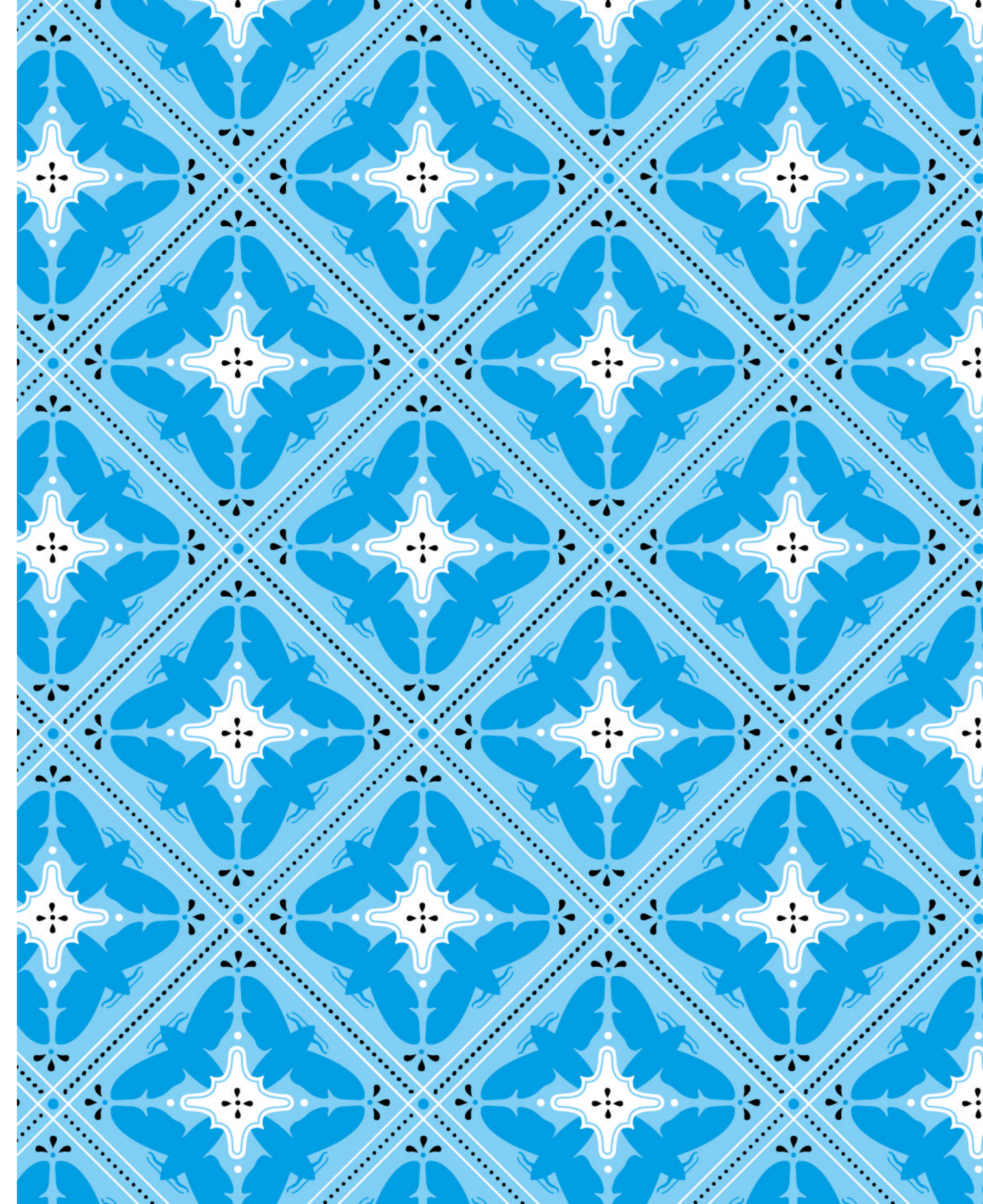
# Little White Lies

TRUTH & MOVIES

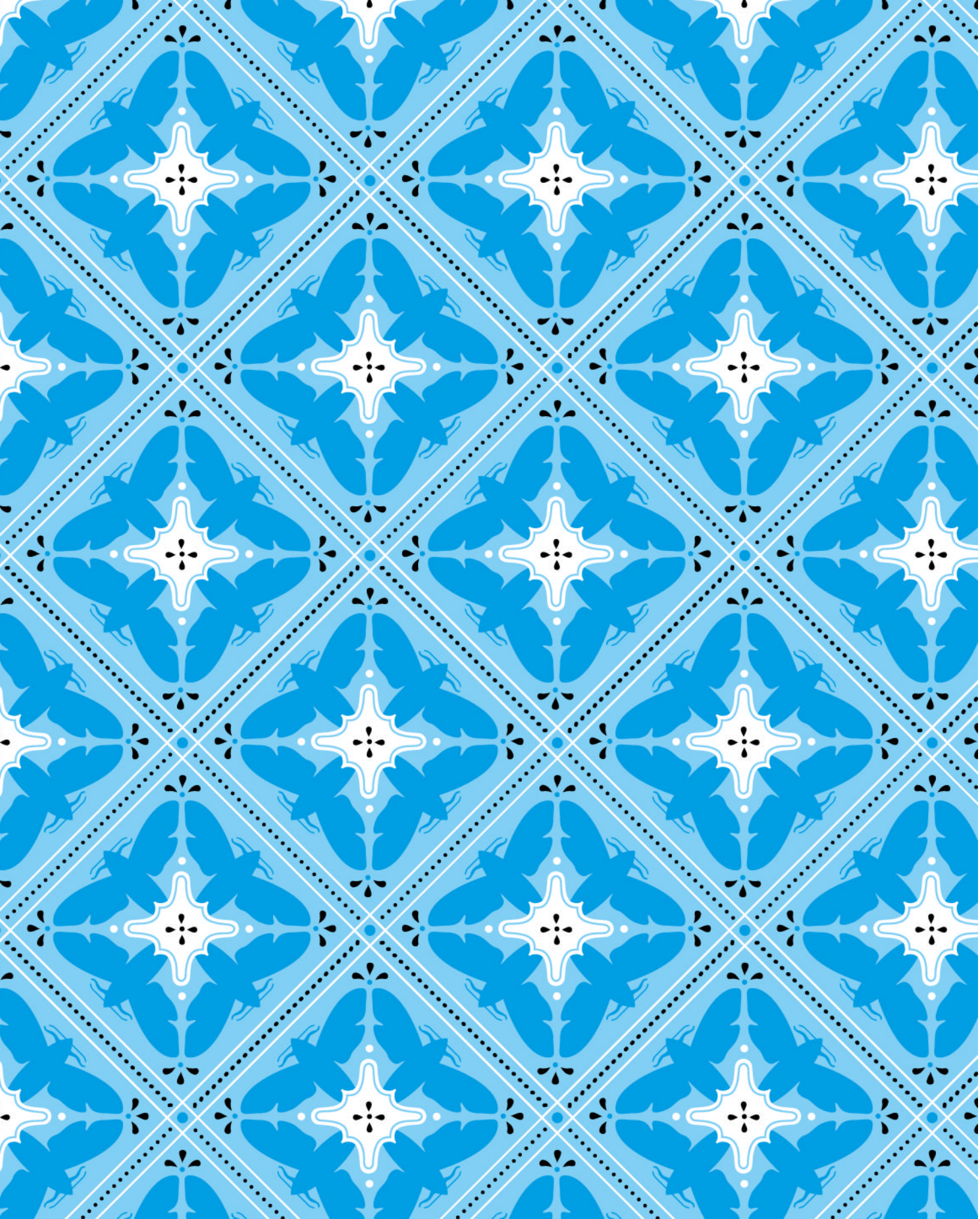


CRIMSON PEAK











♦ ACT 1 ♦







“TO THE  
HILLS  
WE RAISE  
OUR  
EYES.”







-INTRODUCING-

# HE GREAT

# ERMO

LITTLE WHITE LIES PRESENTS

THE WORLD-FAMED MYSTIFIER

DIRECTOR  
OF

CRIMSON PEAK

-A MAN WHO SEES A WORLD THAT EXISTS BEYOND THE ONE WE CAN SEE-

WORDS BY DAVID JENKINS. ILLUSTRATED BY TIMBA SMITS.

HE MAKES BIG, COLOURFUL STUDIO BLOCKBUSTERS. HE ALSO MAKES POLITICALLY-INFUSED, SPANISH-LANGUAGE GHOST STORIES. WITH *CRIMSON PEAK*, THESE TWO WORLDS FINALLY CONVERGE. THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED WHEN *LWLIES* SPOKE TO THE GREAT GUILLERMO DEL TORO.



PRICE PER ISSUE  
10  
PENNANCE

# TORO and ROBBINS

# WEEKLY Graphic

PRINTED IN LONDON, ENGLAND

ISSUE

Vol. 61

Single,  
Number,

TORO AND ROBBINS, PUBLISHERS,  
NO. 71A LEONARD STREET SHOREDITCH, LONDON.

Price,  
Tennence,

No. 1

## THE GREAT GUILLERMO OR, GUILLERMO DEL TORO

At the climax of Guillermo del Toro's *Hellboy 2: The Golden Army*, the director conducts a prolonged fight scene atop a system of giant golden cogs. He is fascinated by cogs. And machinery. He says so in interviews. So, from this we can infer an attraction to the rational, a guy who is becalmed by mechanical logic. And yet, his movies are packed full of monsters, ghouls, apparitions and creatures of unspecified origin. From this we can also infer an attraction to the irrational, a man who sees a world that exists beyond the physical realm. This ideological conflict is what earns Del Toro his status as one of the greats. His latest film, *Crimson Peak*, again combines his abiding obsessions, a story about a macabre clash between the past and the future, modernity and archaism, the realm of the living and that of the dearly departed.

*Crimson Peak* sees young, bespectacled damsel, Edith (played by Mia Wasikowska), romantically drawn to the English bounder and upstart mining magnate, Baronet Thomas Sharpe (Tom Hiddleston), who is never seen without his unsmiling sister, Lucille (Jessica Chastain), by his side. The three depart from the beating heart of the industrial revolution in Boston to the foggy hills of Cumbria, England and a dilapidated country house known by the locals as 'Crimson Peak' on account of the blood-red clay upon which it sits and into which it is slowly subsiding. Del Toro has namechecked a number of gothic literary masterworks as his touchstones: 'Jane Eyre', 'Wuthering Heights' and 'Rebecca'. It also completes an unofficial trilogy of movies which began with 2001's *The Devil's Backbone* and continued with 2006's *Pan's Labyrinth*.

### EXTRA

AN INTERVIEW WITH  
THE WORLD-FAMED  
MYSTIFIER

**LWLies: You are over in LA now. Are you finishing up the film, or is it all done?**

Del Toro: No, no, I finished the movie literally last week. It's a movie that I have been finishing more than any other movie I've ever done.

**Do you have a finite amount of time where you can actually polish a movie?**

Well, normally I'm delivering the movie in the nick of time, like a few weeks before it opens. But in this instance, because I finished shooting in October 2014, I've had almost a year to tweak it and I spent more time in the edit suite correcting the colour of the movie and the cinematography and doing the final touches. So I became quite obsessed with the movie. It became almost unhealthy.

**Were we to see the unadorned footage that you shot compared to the finished product, would there be anything recognisable there?**

Oh yes, yes. Listen, the fact is the raw footage looked gorgeous because I always say, the look of a movie is a table of four legs. One is of course cinematography, but the other three are wardrobe, set production design and direction. And I think they are indivisible. You cannot have great cinematography with a bad set. Or terrible costumes. We designed the sets and we specifically designed where the windows were going to be, what the light sources were going to be, and the colour palette of the walls. So the raw footage looks very beautiful, but then we go through months and months of tweaking because I worked with two colours that are very elusive: one is gold, and the other one is cyan. And you know, if you missed the mark a little on cyan, you've gone to complete blue or complete green. If you miss the mark with gold, you end up with reddish orange, or you end up with greenish yellow. I don't know why my life has been like this, but I always work in those two colours and it takes months to get them to the place I want them to be.

**Are there digital cameras that capture those colours to your satisfaction?**

Yes. But what I find is that if you're aiming for, say, the look



of a more conventional historical period movie, it would be much better to do it with film, because it tends to be softer and it lends itself really beautifully to a sort of pastel hue, the desaturation and stuff like that. I've been experimenting a lot with over saturation in the colours. *Pacific Rim* was all about that. I wanted to make the colours in this movie very saturated. In some instances, my cinematographer and I jokingly said, 'Let's try to get Technicolor on camera'. We were using lights that were very magenta on the set and other that were very purple, and I wanted to make a movie that didn't feel desaturated or pastel like most period movies. And therefore, digital was the way to go with this.

**I'm not quite sure how I would describe this form of cinematography, but the interior scenes recalled those in Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon*.**

Yes, you're absolutely right in the sense that I talked about what is called 'one source lighting', which means that most of the light in an interior scene came from a single large window. And you get this full, almost painterly effect.

**It looks stunning.**

We also did a lot of shots by candlelight, but with the advantage of having to force the optical, or not having to force depth of field like they did with *Barry Lyndon*. For example, one scene that creates a beautiful atmosphere is in the ballroom, the waltz scene. We did it mostly with the existing lights, we worked with a light fixture that was very large and mounted above the eye-line of the camera. And that was it. It was almost like the conditions of creating a painting.

**The waltz sequence, which involves a candle not being blown out, may even be a direct reference to *Barry Lyndon*.**

It was, it was. Curiously, it's one of my favourite Kubrick

films. I like the Kubricks that nobody likes. I love *Eyes Wide Shut* and *Barry Lyndon*.

**I think it's cool to like *Eyes Wide Shut* now.**

Oh, that's good to know. I feel like the guy who wore bell bottom pants long enough that they came back around. But I love them because I think the sense of space and time that *Barry Lyndon* exhibits is unique, and I did a detailed study of the fabrics and the colour. *Crimson Peak* tries to tell the story of a girl who is born at the edge of modernity. Boston is the most electrified city in the world. They have lightbulbs, they have steam trains, they have everything that is modern. That feeling of modernity is created by the first part of the movie being colour-coded into gold, sepia and tobacco. And it's really saturated, rich and golden. She travels to the Old World, which is all this very creepy cyan and greenish gold. That journey is told, for me, as much through the visuals as it is through the writing.

**When you're watching movies by other directors, do you find that they are as attuned to the importance of something like colour as you seem to be?**

A lot of people are! There is a thing that I jokingly call 'eye protein' which is not to create eye candy but to create something with a little substance that helps tell the story. I was watching a movie with one of my daughters and I started to tell her, 'Pay attention to the straight lines and the colour blue,' because I knew the movie a little bit and she started seeing it and she said, 'Oh my god, that was red and now it's blue.' She started reading it as a painting and enjoying it on another level. You know, my two kids are very good illustrators and we have long discussions about colour and composition when we watch the movies. Some people are very conscious of colour, how they've used it to tell the story,

and how they use it to advance the story dramatically. But what is very beautiful is to tell them, 'Look, storytelling can be done in a purely visual fashion.' One colour that I am very particular about is obviously red, because all the reds in this movie, which are very, very few, all lead to the same past, to the ghosts, to the crimes and the passions and the secrets of *Crimson Peak*.

**How did you decide on the shade of red in *Crimson Peak*? To me it looks like 'Hammer red'.**

That's a great way of naming it, because Hammer did use a particular colour of blood that has a lot of photo fluid liquid in it. It was one of the nicest bloods ever put on film. And because of Hammer being what they were, they used it liberally. I would loved to have called it that, but we did have 30 swatches of colour, and we made sure that we could replicate the colour digitally, physically and using different materials. Some of the floor needed to be painted with waxes and some of the liquids needed to ooze, so we found a way to replicate it everywhere. And red is a really brutal colour because it's very voracious. Even the most subtle red burns and obliterates everything else. I mean, I did a movie – two movies! – where the protagonist was a red demon. I know how voracious this colour is.

**It's weird actually, watching this, I was thinking that it's so rare to see red in a movie that's not in a symbolic fashion.**

It needed to be in the right combination, because red, as you know, is never purely red. You can have a bluish red, orange red, red that is more rust coloured, and we made many mixes and tested it under every light. When you put red under a blue light, it's going to become sort of brownish. And we needed to find ways to light the ghosts so the red would remain. It was an interesting experiment. I was trying to make that red the past. To have that

past seep through the floor, seep through the snow and reveal its true nature. Crime never stays hidden in classic romance.

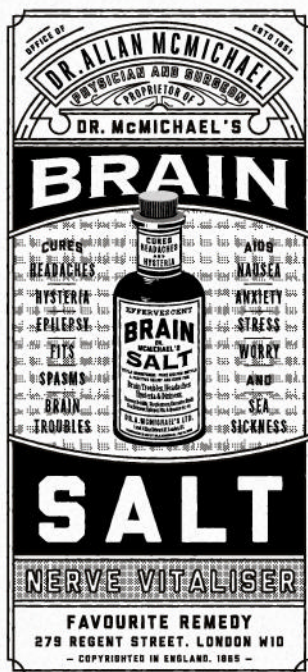
**With this film, it appears like you're continuing work that you started with *The Devil's Backbone* and *Pan's Labyrinth*?**

It is very much of a piece with them. I wanted to try and do an adult movie in English, because after doing *Mimic*, I decided I would do my pulp, youngish, light movies in English and do the adult stuff in Spanish. Because I had such a bad experience doing that movie. Honest to god I was hoping to make a great, giant insect movie and it was very disappointing to find out that the studio had other plans. Unfortunately for me with Legendary and Universal, they gave me creative freedom and they just said, 'Look we've got to stay on a budget because we don't want you to make it incredibly expensive.' So we were very smart and frugal with how we made the movie look bigger than it really is.

**Talking of *Mimic*, on the credits it says that this was co-written by Matthew Robbins. Is this the first time you guys have collaborated since that movie?**

No, we actually have co-written about 10 screenplays or so. And we've been collaborating on things that have not gotten made, or we co-wrote a movie we produced called *Don't Be Afraid of the Dark*. I love Matthew and he's a dear friend. And we wrote this in 2006, and very much did it for ourselves. And you know, I just wanted to embrace gothic romance which is a side of filmmaking that I don't see any more. I really miss that genre. It's a very cagey genre because if you go expecting pure romance, there's a lot of human and emotional darkness in it. But if you go expecting a straight horror movie, it's more atmospheric than it is purely scary. It's a genre that is harder to market.





I found it to be an overwhelmingly sad and melancholic film. Is it maybe too sad to be a horror movie? Are horror movies allowed to be sad?

Most of the stories that I have directed or produced, be it *The Devil's Backbone* or *Pan's Labyrinth* or *The Orphanage* or many, many others, for me, the beauty of horror is that we care about loss. And these movies are poetic about that loss. The ending of *The Orphanage* or the ending of *Pan's Labyrinth* makes it sort of beautiful. It's the same with *Crimson Peak*. I was really affected when I was young by a phrase by Henry James, where he said that ghosts are ultimately the past. And a gothic romance is about how you are paralysed and you cannot move into the future unless you can solve the mysteries of the past. I thought

it was a very smart analysis, and of course the past is about things that you have lost. It's not things that are with you, really. And I wanted to make the movie a very melancholic movie where even if you make the villains terrifying and you make them do horrible things, you almost – if I've done my job right – love them, you almost feel for them.

**I think this is your most tragic movie.**

Yeah, because the movie is about love. I mean, I know this sounds silly to verbalise, but for me the movie is about many types of love. The love of a father, which is very possessive, even if it's well intentioned. I think that the love of the mother and the father of Thomas and Lucille, which is horrifying, is encapsulated by that scene where Lucille has the monologue about her mother feeding the porridge to Edith. Or the love of Lucille for Thomas, which is suffocating, and then his love of Edith, which is almost all-forgiving and ultimately beautiful.

**It's blind.**

It is blind. In most gothic romances, the dark brooding hero is proven innocent of all the charges. And I wanted very much to make a movie where he is guilty, he's complicit. And yet, the love is still there. You can still love that person. And for me the idea of the movie is what Lucille says: 'Love makes monsters of us all.'

***Pacific Rim* is very affirmative about love and the union of souls. This is almost the opposite side of the coin. It's very pessimistic.**

It's curious because what I wanted to do – and you can see me quoted in pre-production interviews saying this – I wanted to make an anti-romantic romance. I wanted to make a movie about a girl becoming her own person. I wanted to show that she doesn't need a dashing

hero and that she doesn't need to depend on love to be strong. And it's very much a movie where I try to take the damsel in distress through all the distress I can until she becomes a damsel no more and starts kicking ass. I wanted to make a movie about butterflies and moths, where the butterfly is seen as a beautiful, useless little object, but this fragile little butterfly turns out to be made of steel.

**I can't recall ever seeing a character like Lucille in your films before.**

Well, I never loved a bad guy as much as I love Lucille. That's the reality. I adore Lucille. She is my favourite character of the movie in many ways. Because I understand her point of view. I know she's horribly wrong, but I can see her being a character that thought she was doing right. Jessica and I always came to her with great sympathy and great love. There is a passage in a Thomas Harris novel, I think it was 'Red Dragon', where he was talking about a serial killer and he said, the reason that he kills her is because he is too shy to talk to his victims. I thought that was really interesting, because you always get a serial killer presented as super powerful, and I thought, isn't it interesting that she is a shy girl. She's actually damaged, a dog that has been whipped too many times. My heart goes out to her and my heart goes out to Thomas. And I think a good gothic romance needs you to fall in love with the bad guys, even more than you do with the good guys. If you remember Du Maurier's 'Rebecca', the protagonist doesn't even have a name, and the most salient character that you remember is Mrs Danvers, the house keeper.

**I have never read the novel of 'Rebecca', but it's probably my least favourite Hitchcock film.**

It was the one Hitchcock where David O Selznick tampered with it, you know. Selznick really got in the way

of Hitchcock doing a purely Hitchcockian film. But it has, I think, a strange attraction for me. Now I think Hitchcock does sort of an American gothic, if you will. When you think of *Shadow of a Doubt* you remember Uncle Charlie as the most salient character. In the same way, in Hitchcock, the villain is the key. You remember Bruno in *Strangers on a Train*. I think that Hitchcock was very influenced by the gothic romance sensibility, beyond *Rebecca* and beyond *Jamaica Inn*. I think his love of gothic romance was at work in his silent films, too.

**Even in *Psycho* and *Notorious*, there are gothic elements.**

One hundred percent. I mean the poisoning of Ingrid Bergman, the whole crumbling house in *Psycho*, and the fact that all gothic romance needs to be tied to a building. It's a key to reinterpreting *Psycho* as a piece of gothic. And I think that's what was fascinating about his American career, that he was able to bring this very old world pulse to the telling of very modern, American stories.

**One of the things I don't like about *Rebecca* is where it moves away from Joan Fontaine's perspective about two thirds in, and then you see the rest of the story from various perspectives. I like the fact that *Crimson Peak* is all told from Edith's perspective.**

Yeah, I think that we cut away from Edith only two times, really. But other than that, it's not a mystery where you're going to find a postmodern twist. Oh, they're all dead! Or she was dead, and she's a ghost! None of that. It's a mystery in a very quaint, very classical way. She's going to need to decipher the clues and, during the course of the movie, the character of the ghosts, the way you see them, changes. Like they did in *The Devil's Backbone*.



**This film is more in the vein of Jean Cocteau, James Whale, *Eyes Without a Face*, and all these more melancholy fairy tale horror films rather than something that's out-and-out brutal like *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*.**

I'm more attracted to the visuals of horror than I am attracted to the trappings of horror. I really want to make movies where, hopefully, you understand that the darkest and the brightest thing we have is humanity, and I feel that the only difference between a fairytale and a gothic romance is that in a fairy tale you need to work with more extremes. Like the Captain in *Pan's Labyrinth*. He relates a little to Lucille, but he's a much darker character, he's much more villainous. He takes pride in his brutality.

**Do you think it's because Lucille is a woman that you couldn't make her as vile as the captain?**

Very much so. I think that Fascism is very much a masculine expression. Fascists are basically enamoured with daddy's dick, they are all so taken with being male. And it's all about the strength of the many and unity before a Fatherland. It's really quite creepy. And the soul of Lucille is ultimately a soul I understand more. Lucille is selfless, whereas I think fascism is an incredibly egotistical cult. It is the cult of everyone being the supreme male. And Fascists are not very nuanced, I find.

**I can't imagine the term sacrifice would come up in fascism, unless it was some kind of blood sacrifice of someone else. Mostly involving the sacrifice of others.**

Who don't want to be sacrificed... I come from a country where machismo is enacted in so many brutal ways every day.

**Disney have lately been very successful with live action**

**remakes of classic Disney movies. Things like *Cinderella* and *Alice in Wonderland*. Will you make one of these?**

Well, I wrote and designed *Beauty and the Beast* for Warners Brothers, and it pains me that we are not able to do it, because it's one of the few times I have been typing and weeping at the same time. But, I'm also pursuing the possibility of doing a stop-frame animation *Pinnocchio* set during the rise of Fascism in Italy. I am actively

**What do you mean by 'adult movie'?**

That it doesn't deliver the giggle-giggle elbow nudging thrills of a movie where you roar and you're throwing popcorn and grabbing each other's arms. It's a movie that has a very beautiful but very dark soul. And I think it needed to be adult in its concerns. It is about adult emotions. Love has a dark side that needs to exist. And you need to accept it.

**“I try to take the damsel in distress through all the distress I possibly can until she becomes a damsel no more and starts kicking ass.”**

pursuing these things. But you know, the fact is, people ask, 'Why do you choose to do this over this?' You don't choose. A career mostly is the clash between what you want to do and what you can finance. It was not easy to finance this movie. The market is by definition very conservative and it's very hard to get them made. For example, for *Crimson Peak*, I have to give off about 30 per cent of my salary, and change entirely the way that we approach the deal and make the movie. They gave me a hard line – they said this is the cut-off point of the budget and if you go beyond, it comes out of your pocket. And I have to accept these terms. Whereas if we were making a superhero movie, the terms would be much more relaxed. Or if we were making *Crimson Peak* as a PG-13, they would have given me more money. But I refused. It needed to be an adult movie.

**Have you ever found a satisfying definition of the term 'ghost' in art, literature or film? Something that you find meaningful?**

Well, I must say I'm very proud of the definition I created in *The Devil's Backbone*, where they say that a ghost is an insect in amber, a thing left pending, an awful sealed thing, you know. Like a photograph, like the loop of a movie. I also love very much the Nigel Kneale idea in that BBC movie from 1972, *The Stone Tape*, where he says that basically ghosts can be a loop recorded by the house. And it's very much Nigel's theory where he says, whether it's the minerals in the stone or the earth underneath, a house can record something and repeat it. And I think that's a very interesting theory. I have experienced two ghost encounters in my life and contrary to what people might believe, I'm really a skeptic. I

don't want to believe, and yet two times I have heard ghostly, disembodied voices, very, very clearly. And they were very scary at the time.

**Can I ask when that was?**

The most terrifying one was in New Zealand. We were scouting locations for *The Hobbit*, and we came to a hotel in a place called Waitomo, and I had read that there was an old hotel which had a haunted room. It was off season, and the hotel was closed and they opened it just for me and my group of scouts. It was just eight people. And I foolishly said, 'Can I get the haunted room?' So I got the haunted room. And in the middle of the night I heard a murder being committed in the room. A woman shrieking for about five minutes, horrible blood curdling shrieks. And then a man sobbing and sighing with great regret. And I was not in the middle of a seance, and it wasn't a stormy night. It was a very nice night and I was watching *The Wire* on DVD. It was completely inauspicious conditions for a ghost apparition.

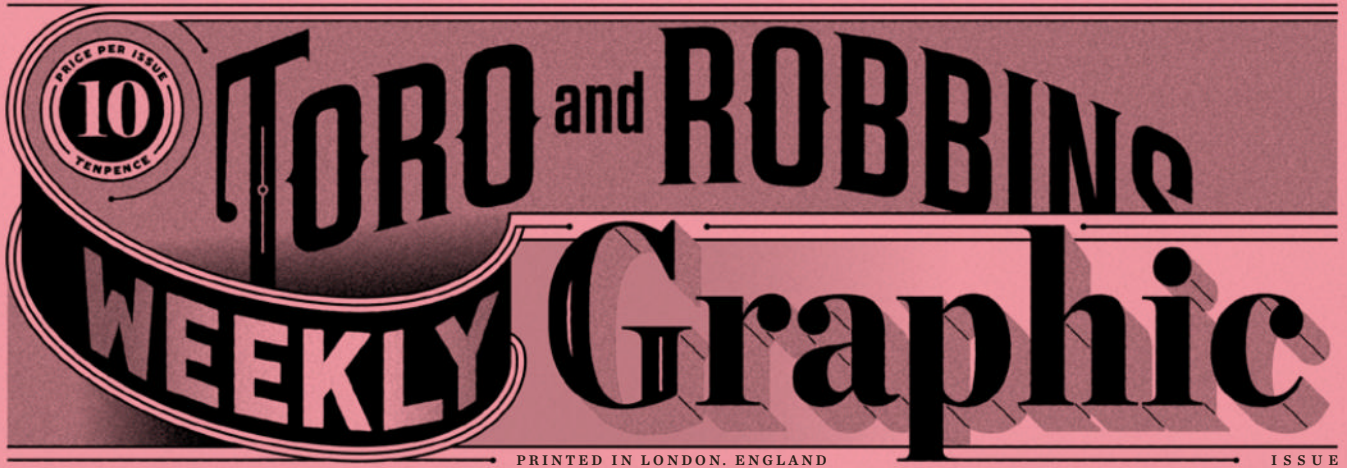
**And it definitely wasn't a ruse by the hotel owners?**

Oh no, the hotel owners were actually very disinterested in us. Actually, they were really pissed off that we made them open the hotel.

**As someone who is interested in this literary world of ghosts and as someone whose job it is to invent how people would react to a situation like that, what was your reaction?**

Well it lasted for about a good five to 10 minutes, and the crying lasted for another 10 minutes. And I was able to actually track the sounds to the bathroom. I tracked them to a vent above the toilet which went down into the cellar. And when I heard it was coming from there, I very cowardly proceeded to put my earphones in and listen to *The Wire* on DVD. I didn't sleep at all that night ☹





PRINTED IN LONDON, ENGLAND

ISSUE

Vol. 61

Single,  
Number,

TORO AND ROBBINS, PUBLISHERS,  
NO. 71A LEONARD STREET SHOREDITCH, LONDON.

Price,  
Tennence,

No. 2

# AN INTRODUCTION TO THE MARVELLOUS MIA

WORDS BY  
DAVID EHRLICH

OR  
MIA WASIKOWSKA

ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
TIMBA SMITS

IN PRAISE OF THIS ELUSIVE AUSTRALIAN ACTRESS,  
BEGUILING STAR OF GUILLERMO DEL TORO'S *CRIMSON PEAK*

*"I can see in you the glance of a curious sort of bird through the close-set bars of a cage, a vivid, restless, captive; were it but free, it would soar cloud-high."*

JANE EYRE

If you want to see Mia Wasikowska clearly, it helps to look at her through a window. The uncommonly opaque actress from Canberra, Australia whose pale moon face looms large over *Crimson Peak*, has been accused of disappearing into the background – *New York Times* critic Manohla Dargis, in her review of 2014's *Tracks*, wrote that Wasikowska, "Tends to be a recessive screen presence." But see her behind a sheet of glass, a thin sliver of distance separating her from the world on the other side, and the texture of her presence is

revealed as though a screen has just been unfurled in front of a projector that was previously just beaming its light into the void. Suddenly it becomes clear that she isn't blending into her environment so much as she's being held captive by it.

One such shot in Park Chan-wook's 2013 film, *Stoker*, is so revealing that it almost doubles as a self-portrait. In that film Wasikowska plays India Stoker, a morbid and withdrawn teenage girl whose mysterious uncle Charlie shows up in the immediate aftermath of her father's untimely death

and promptly begins to put the moves on her mother. From a shadowy nook in the foyer, India spies Charlie and her mother sharing a dining room dance to the disinhibiting tones of Lee Hazlewood and Nancy Sinatra's 'Summer Wine'. The in-laws begin to kiss in close-up, and then the camera backs out to where India should be surreptitiously watching them from the next room. But she's gone, and you can feel the emptiness of the space where she used to be. Then, a flash of pale white deep in the background. India has snuck outside and made her way to the grass next to the dining room for a closer look.

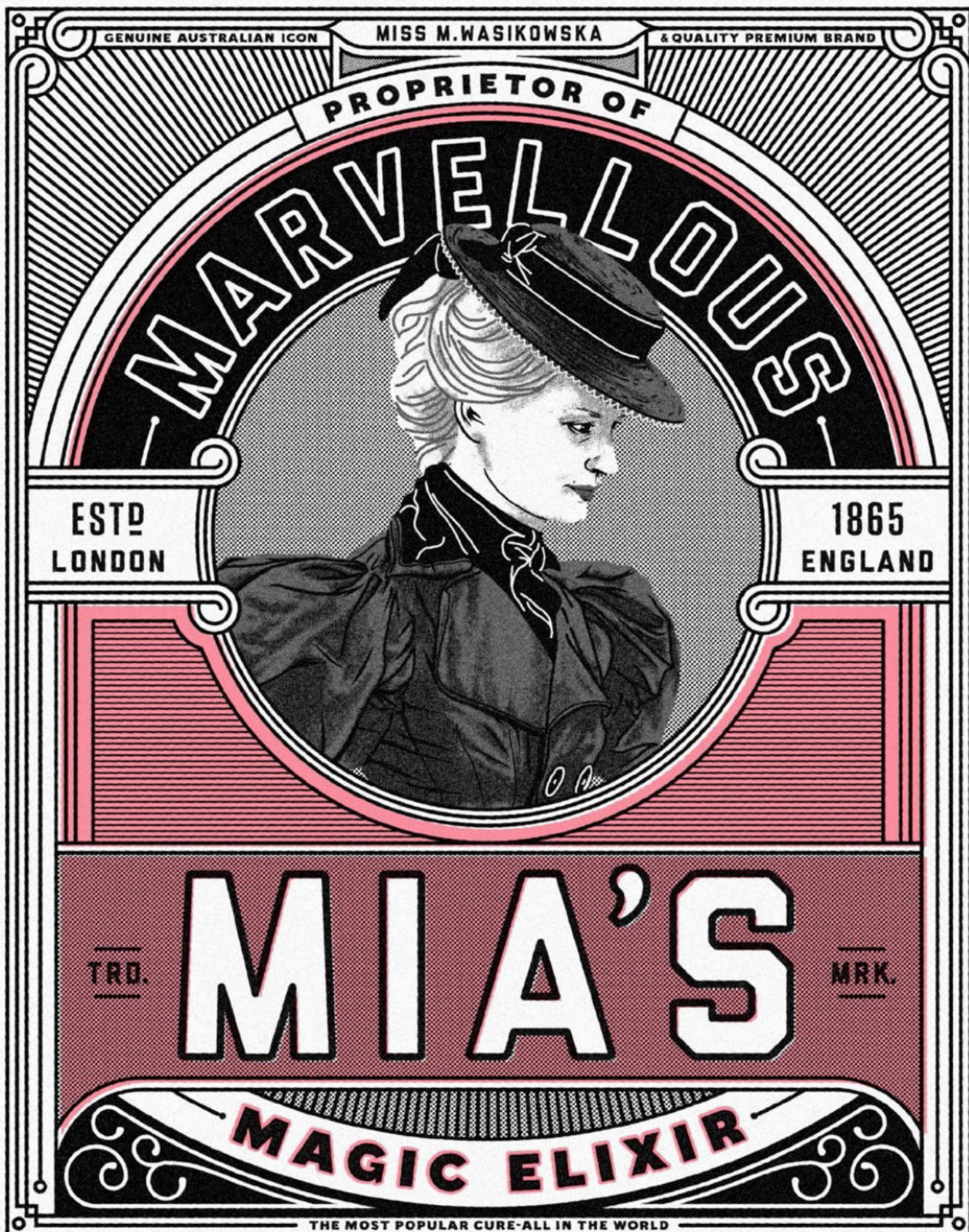
Until this point, India has been as much of a mystery to us as her uncle Charlie has been to her, so small and unassuming that she's nearly swallowed alive by the oversized kitchen chair in which she takes her

breakfast. But this new vantage point fundamentally reframes the girl's relationship to the familial drama in play – seeing India at once inside of this incestuous Gothic hothouse and also just beyond its walls, both within and without, you realise that she isn't an audience proxy or a tragic damsel in a demented fairy tale, but rather a girl who's actively trying to find her place in the middle of a battle royale between nature and nurture. Seeing India in confrontation with her surroundings rather than as an expression of them, Wasikowska's inherent furtiveness assumes a sharp new feel. She isn't passive, she's planning. She isn't window-dressing, she's a captive animal testing her fence for weak points, looking for cracks in the messed up glass menagerie where all of her characters seem to live.











She's a fiercely naturalistic actress who's shown an enduring affinity for films in which the aesthetic of the world around her is either steeply heightened or borderline unreal. Wasikowska has a gift for playing characters whose blunt lack of affect exposes the unnaturalness of their constraints. The daughter of Polish-born photographer Marzena Wasikowska, her first experiences in front of the camera came at the behest of her mother. "We never had to smile or perform," she told the *Toronto Globe* and *Mail* in 2010. "We weren't always conscious of being photographed. We'd just do our thing, and she'd take pictures of us."

Watching her at work, you get the sense that nothing's changed. She's always in the present tense, her characters in a constant state of becoming. Her performances are seamless, her movements never indicating that her characters are simply playing an arrangement of pre-orchestrated beats – sometimes, in her more flirtatious moments, she dips her shoulders and sticks her neck forward to imply interest, propping them up like the stumps of invisible wings. Naturally, this presence has made her an axiomatic choice for lush (if lightly revisionist) period dramas, the actress imbuing the likes of *Jane Eyre* with an immediacy she hasn't known since they were first conceived on the page.

In Sophie Barthes' *Madame Bovary* from 2014, after the eponymous bored housewife rebuffs the advances of a handsome marquis, the camera lingers on her expression behind the second-floor window of a French château. In the knotted tangle behind her eyes, she is re-conceiving her entire world from the ground up as she stares over the crowd revealing below, serene like a duck whose legs are furiously kicking under the surface. In the following scene, Bovary travels to the marquis'

house and throws herself at him, their encounter the first domino to fall in a series of events during which her bourgeois life will unravel in tatters.

It's hardly incidental that Wasikowska's heroines are often framed behind a window just before taking the actions that will ultimately define their narrative trajectories. In David Cronenberg's *Maps to the Stars* from 2013, Wasikowska plays a schizophrenic burn victim – the secret progeny of an incestuous Hollywood power couple – who returns to Tinseltown in an attempt to find closure with the rest of her strange brood. As the film careens into its morbid third act, Agatha spies her chauffeur boyfriend having sex with her boss in the back of his limo. The camera finds her peeping on the scene through the long glass shards that line the front door of her employer's Beverly Hills mansion, the glare on her face staggered behind the glare landing just in front of it. Suddenly, the film morphs from dark comedy to Shakespearian tragedy – within 20 minutes, her mother will be dead, and Agatha will be among the victims of a double suicide.

— + —  
**"WASIKOWSKA HAS BECOME BETTER AT NAVIGATING THE VOID BETWEEN IDENTITY AND ASSIGNMENT THAN ANY OTHER ACTRESS SINCE ROBERT BRESSON STOPPED DIRECTING THEM."**  
 — + —

The window clarifies Agatha's relationship to her environment – she finally realises how the world sees her... she realises her place in the system, and in doing so, she knows that she has to destroy it. This calls to mind something Wasikowska once told *The Independent* during an interview for Richard Ayoade's 2013 film, *The Double*: "I could be standing next to a poster of myself and no one would look."

Beyond *Maps to the Stars*, which arguably takes place in a world of its own sick design, Lisa Cholodenko's *The Kids Are All Right* and Gus Van Sant's *Restless* are Wasikowska's only two movies that take place in the contemporary world as we know it. *The Double*, a brilliant dark comedy shot with the same rigid precision that defines the bureaucratic nightmare at its core, might as well be set in a parallel dimension, and may have been impenetrable if not for the warmth of Wasikowska's performance as the object of our hero's narcissistic crush. Her character spends most of her screen time being seen through the window of her one-bedroom apartment, where – at least in the severely limiting voyeuristic gaze of the simpering male lead – she transforms from a cold and hardened siren into a misunderstood and poetic soul who draws delicate illustrations of herself with her own blood. Through the window, she is belittled. Like most of Wasikowska's characters, this one is stunted by her place in the world, but the actress has become better at navigating the void between identity and assignment than any other actress since Robert Bresson stopped directing them, and it's a particularly valuable space, as so many women have been marginalised and confined there.

Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland* from 2010 is arguably among the worst things to ever happen in the history of visual art, but it's easy to see why Wasikowska was nevertheless such a natural Alice. "From the moment I fell down that rabbit hole I've been told where I must go and who I must be. I've been shrunk, stretched, scratched, and stuffed into a teapot. I've been accused of being Alice and of not being Alice but this is my dream. I'll decide where it goes from here." Through the looking glass, indeed 🐇

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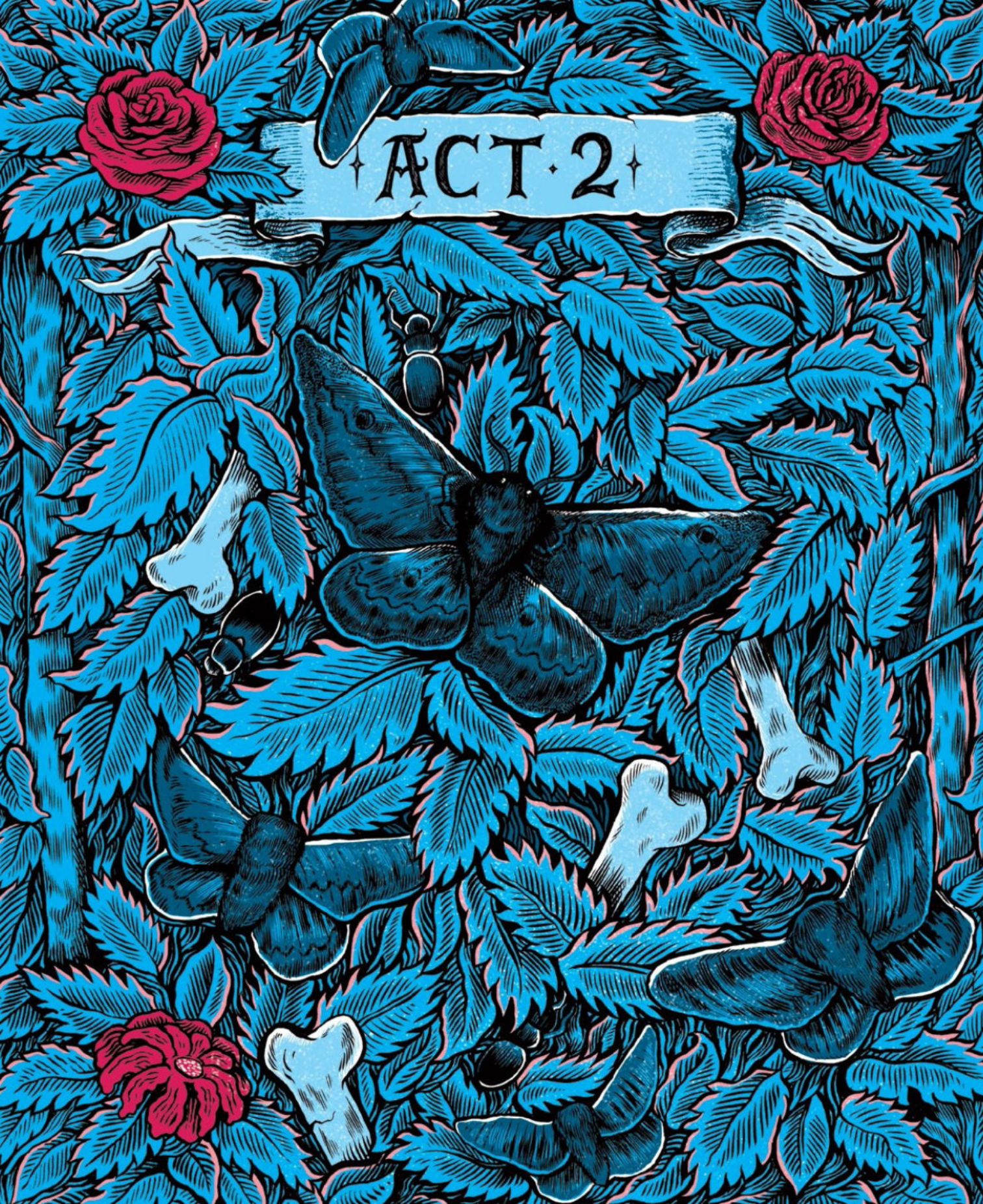




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WORDS BY PETER LABUZA, ILLUSTRATED BY ADAM NICKEL

**LWLIES DISCOVERS THAT EARLY CINEMA SAW  
THE ICONIC HAUNTED HOUSE AS THE CATALYST  
FOR MIRTH RATHER THAN TERROR.**





When did haunted house movies become so... haunted? Perhaps a strange question – cinematic haunted houses now include terrifying locations such as the Overlook Hotel, 112 Ocean Avenue in Amityville, and the Cabin in the Woods. But for the first quarter of cinema's history, haunted houses were more often the set of comedies, carrying more laughs than scares. Pinned by critic James Agee as "Comedy's Greatest Era," the slapstick comics produced some of the most creative haunted house movies. Edward Cline's 1921 *The Haunted House* with Buster Keaton might be the genre's gold standard. After a farcical opening, Keaton's Stone Face tracks down a series of stolen bank notes to a supposedly haunted house, and only this clueless rebel is foolish enough to enter the mansion, where he encounters a series of booby traps and dancing skeletons (spoiler: it's just the robbers in disguise). What's so wondrous about Keaton is that while his face registers little emotion, his body carries all the absent fear, bursting from one side of the frame to the next. Because he's not actually scared, we laugh at his over-the-top acrobatics. One particular gag with an old man holding his shirt in his most athletic attempts to run away shows off Keaton's physical prowess for turning a simple gag into an athletic ballet.



**BOWERS COMEDY CORPORATION. 1928**

Keaton wasn't the only slapstick comedian to run terrified through a haunted house, and one of the gems of this genre comes from the more obscure Charley Bowers. Bowers' personality is a little less pronounced – he never shows the same invention with either his body or face as Keaton – but his films display madcap stop-motion animation which bursts into reality. In 1928's *There It Is*, Bowers plays a Scotland Yard detective (who lives in a fenced yard wearing Scottish kilts) sent to America to solve a haunted house with his trusty sidekick Mac, a pocket-sized beetle. The film plays with the limited frame, and thus each gag is dependent on things appearing in and out of our purview, mostly a kooky bespectacled man terrorising the house by smashing into everyone there before disappearing through the other side of the frame. Every wall becomes a door, every ceiling an escape route, every rug a trap door. Bowers' use of animation in the physical sets is astonishing, such as when a wagon magically runs through a wall in a single shot – a marvel to consider how it must have been filmed. Just like in Keaton, it turns out there's no haunting after all. Bowers has instead been investigating a mad house, and both work with the notion that scares in cinema have the same structure as gags.



**UNIVERSAL MANUFACTURING. 1914**

The 1910s saw the rise of the Hollywood studio system that dominated the first half of movie history. While the success of Biograph's *The Birth of a Nation* in 1915 is well known, studios began producing longer films (five to six reels as opposed to no more than two), as the break up of the Motion Picture Patents Company led to new joint ventures which made it easier to both produce and distribute feature-length films. One exception, however, was the Universal Manufacturing Company, which continued to produce two-reelers throughout the 1910s. Universal followed a more collaborative system of writing-producing-directing-acting, employing 20 female directors on staff, and comedies were less physical than they would become a decade later. The genteel tradition emphasised social disruption and *faux pas*, often through intertitles as opposed to the vaudevillian gags of low class comedy. One of those shorts was 1914's *A Night of Thrills*. This two reel comedy is now lost, but descriptions in *Moving Picture World* journal describe it as a comedy of re-marriage between a bickering couple over the loss of a rich uncle. The "horror" comes from a series of mistaken ghostly identities, whether it be the couple or the set of robbers sneaking in at the middle of the night, one played by a young Lon Chaney.





PARAMOUNT, 1917

Directed by William C De Mille (brother to Cecil) for Famous-Laskey Players (which became Paramount Pictures), *The Ghost House* follows two-school age sisters who take refuge in a haunted house formerly owned by their uncle and now (surprise!) is used as a hideout for robbers. The girls team up with a college boy to battle against a young Eugene Palette as all the characters once again mistake each other for actual ghosts. *The Ghost House* is also a lost feature of the silent era, but descriptions of it describe a light and entertaining picture, with good-looking actors filling the rolls. George Graves, reviewing the five reel film for Motography, exclaimed that the picture, “has a better chance of doing well with younger people, since ghosts are readily more real to them than their effete elders.” In none of these films do actual ghosts appear; haunted houses are simply places where the usual social order runs amok, and thus a site of class amusement.



METRO PICTURES, 1921

Before the United States began producing ghost movies, the craze began in cinema’s true homeland: Paris. Until World War One, Pathé dominated the film industry, making dozens of films a day and exporting them across the world. *The Haunted House*, directed by Segundo de Chomón in 1906, is a prime example of the scenario style comedy that dominated the industry. Three friends arrive at a house in the middle of a storm, only to learn it considers them unwelcome guests. Similar to the slapstick comedies, de Chomón works mostly through editing tricks, while keeping the camera in a single vantage point. The actors move through a series of amusing poses and gestures as they react to disappearing chairs, flaming bats, the entire house tiling (a gag appropriated into Chaplin’s *The Gold Rush*), and in the most creative sequence, an animated knife-and-sausage chase. The popularity of the film led to an exact rip-off made in the US by J Stuart Blackton in 1907, as copyright laws did little to protect Pathé.



## THE BEWITCHED INN

STAR FILM COMPANY, 1896

De Chomón’s film, however, was itself similar to a work made by one of cinema’s first recognised artists, Georges Méliès. For Méliès, cinema was a magic show, what has been coined (by scholar Tom Gunning) as “the cinema of attractions” in the same way carnivals, wax museums and even morgues served as entertainment in the Fin de Siècle of 1890s Paris. So it made sense that Méliès’ early films would capture ghostly spirits in a comedic manner as opposed to terrifying thrills. His *The Bewitched Inn* features the magic man reacting to a series of levitating objects while attempting to go to sleep, finally frustrated when his bed disappears, too. And *The Haunted Castle*, made in 1896, might be the first haunted house movie. The three-minute short follows Méliès as a bat-turned-black magician who terrorises a knight who arrives at his castle through a series of trick photography edits. In the end, the vampire-like creature is defeated by a surprisingly conveniently found cross, but before that, the film depends on the astonishment of the viewer to its magic. For a medium that conjures up illusions, it seems only appropriate the first filmmakers embraced haunted spaces as those as enchanting as the medium itself 🦇



*a Little White Lies*

# HAUNTED HOUSE



## Fun MAP

GET READY FOR A FRIGHT AS LWLIES  
TAKES YOU ON A SPOOKY TOUR OF  
SOME OF CINEMA'S MOST  
INFAMOUS HAUNTED HOUSES.

WORDS BY TAHILIA MCKINNON AND BEKZHAN SARSENBAI  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY ADAM NICKEL

## THE HAUNTING

1963 (UK)

Per the film, the setting for Robert Wise's classic horror film, Hill House is supposed to be in, 'the most remote part of New England', but is actually located about five miles southeast of Stratford-upon-Avon, in Warwickshire. The neo-Gothic estate is touted playing the host to many ghouls, including those of the Shirley family who owned the estate for centuries. Now a luxury hotel, it has become known as the most haunted house in Britain.

## THE SHINING

1980 (UK/USA)

A great place for seclusion and scenic beauty. Even though Stanley Kubrick's mind-frazzling masterpiece was shot at Elstree Studios in England, the exterior of the iconic Overlook Hotel is the Timberline Lodge, located in the Hood River Area of northern Oregon. Forty five miles east of Portland, just off Route 26, it was constructed in an effort to combat the Great Depression through public works. The maze itself was built at the MGM Borehamwood Studios and the creepy interior sets were inspired by the Ahwahnee Hotel in Yosemite Park, California. The hotel that inspired Stephen King to write the short story in the first place, The Stanley Hotel, is located at 333 East Wonderview Avenue in Estes Park, Colorado. Nonetheless, King, who famously hated the Kubrick adaptation because it abandoned most of the plot in favour of atmosphere, set his 1997 TV miniseries adaptation in the original hotel. The Stanley is the site of many ghost sightings, and has been investigated by ghost themed reality TV shows. Originally, it was the eeriness of The Stanley that inspired King to write the novel. In the hotel rooms, Channel 42 is reserved for the uninterrupted showing of the R-rated version of Kubrick's film. The Stanley also appears in the Farrelly brothers' comedy *Dumb and Dumber* and Robert Zemeckis' *Forrest Gump*.

## THE INNOCENTS

1961 (UK)

Based on the Henry James story 'The Turn of the Screw', Jack Clayton's *The Innocents* stays true to its Gothic roots. Bly Estate, where Miss Giddens is governess for harmless, little Miles and Flora, is actually Sheffield Park and Gardens at Dane Mille, five miles outside of Uckfield, between East Grinstead and Lewes in East Sussex. The gardens are part of the National Trust and are a popular tourist spot. The house remains in private hands.





## THE AMITYVILLE HORROR

1979 (USA)

A house so popular with tourists it merited a street parking ban from the city government, 112 Ocean Drive was the home of real-life couple George and Kathleen Lutz, who claimed to have experienced supernatural phenomena while living there. Unlike The Stanley hotel or Timberline Lodge, Amityville's citizens resented their town's association with Jay Anson's 1977 book 'The Amityville Horror', which meant that Stuart Rosenberg's adaptation was barred from shooting in the area, let alone the house. One of the main reasons for the outrage was that it was the place where Ronald DeFoe killed his entire family, including his parents and four younger siblings. The family's friends claimed that the Lutzs made up the claims for money, and that the book did not fully represent the facts. Since then, the house has been considerably changed to ward off tourists. The stand in for the Ocean Drive film was at 18 Brooks Road, Tom's River, Ocean County, New Jersey. This house, too, was remodelled. The town hall seen in the city was the actual Tom's River Town Hall, and the church of Rod Steiger's Father Delaney is around 10 miles away from the town, in Point Pleasant.

## PARANORMAL ACTIVITY

2007 (USA)

Director Oren Peli's house, located in San Diego, California, doubled as the home for one of the scariest (and most popular) modern horror films. Peli used the house because, as his trusty pool cleaner told CBS, strange things kept happening within its walls, including the constant feeling that someone was watching him. The house on Bavarian Drive, Rancho Santa Fe, was recently sold for \$749,000, which is a good price for a house where you are guaranteed to be constantly scared.

## THE HOUSE ON HAUNTED HILL

1958 (USA)

Directed by William Castle and featuring one of Vincent Price's trademark creepy turns as Frederick Loren, the house in question is the historic Ennis House, designed by none other than Frank Lloyd Wright. Commissioned by Charles and Mabel Ennis in 1923, the house was based on a Mayan temple and is located at 2607 Glendower Avenue, Los Angeles. It rose to prominence as the haunted house at which Loren invites guests to spend the night, and would later become a Hollywood staple, starring in Lawrence Kasdan's *Grand Canyon*, the 1975 drama *Day of the Locust* and the TV show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Its fame as the 'haunted house' was superseded in 1982, however, when it became Rick Deckard's home in Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*. In need of renovation in 1994 Northridge Earthquake, and heavy rains in 2005, which made it uninhabitable due to structural flaws even before construction finished due to safety concerns, the design, the house was seriously damaged by the 2006, the federal government stepped in and provided a \$4.5 million loan to restore the house. Along with private donations to the Ennis Foundation, around \$6.4 million was spent to save the famous locale. In 2009, the house was sold to businessman Ron Burkle for \$4.5 million, after an initial asking price of \$15 million. Under the terms of the purchase, Burkle had to allow at least 12 days for public visitors, most of them fans of the movies that were shot there. The 1999 remake, which has Geoffrey Rush playing eccentric millionaire Steven Price, used a model rollercoaster based on The Incredible Hulk rollercoaster at Universal Studios, Florida. The driveway of the house is actually the Griffith Observatory, previously a key shooting location for Nicolas Ray's *Rebel Without a Cause*.







## SUSPIRIA

1977 (ITALY)

Dario Argento's innovative horror about an American who discovers that the German ballet academy she is attending is not what it seems was filmed at numerous locations in Italy and Germany. The film itself is set in Freiburg im Breisgau, a university town in southwest Germany, near the border with France. Although the exterior was designed on set, it was based and closely resembles the Haus Zum Walfisch in the town itself. Now a bank, the house has a rich history and was once the abode of the 'Prince of the Humanists' Desiderius Erasmus, the Renaissance scholar who lived there for two years near the end of his life. The house was also damaged by bombing during World War Two in 1944, but was later restored. The interiors of the academy were filmed in Argento's native Rome, with the exteriors shot in Munich.

## POLTERGEIST

1982 (USA)

In Tobe Hooper's supernatural thriller, written and produced by Steven Spielberg, the exterior shots were of a house on Roxbury Street in Forest Hills, Simi Valley, north of Los Angeles. Still a private home, it is often visited by the film's fans.

## BURNT OFFERINGS

1976 (USA)

Although the Robert Marasco book took place in Long Island, director Dan Curtis relocated the story to California, and shot his movie at the Dunsmuir House and Gardens, Oakland, California. A Neoclassical Revival architectural landmark built in 1899 and placed in the US National Register of Historic Places in 1972, it was home for numerous movies, including the horror film *Phantasm*, the Bond film *A View to a Kill* and the underrated Mike Myers comedy-thriller *So I Married an Axe Murderer*.

## THE SIXTH SENSE

1999 (USA)

Like most M Night Shyamalan films, *The Sixth Sense* is set in Philadelphia, the director's hometown. The boy who can see dead people, played by Haley Joel Osment, lives in a house with a lot of open kitchen drawers on St Alban's Place, at 23rd Street southwest of Centre City. Unfortunately there is no Locust Street in Philadelphia, and the house Malcolm Crowe lives in is actually on Delancey Street, Society Hill.



## INSIDIOUS

2010 (USA)

The film with the scary attic and the creepy child was filmed in two houses: 4350 Victoria Park Drive, Los Angeles, where Dalton, played by Ty Simpkins, falls into a coma, and 1153 South Point View Street, midtown LA, where the family flees only to realise that the ghosts have followed them. The old Herald Examiner Building, 1111 South Broadway, Downtown Los Angeles, designed in 1912 by Julia Morgan and home to such films as *The Usual Suspects* and *The Cable Guy*, makes an appearance as 'The Further', the spectral realm where Dalton's soul is captured. The building has not been in regular use since *The Herald Examiner* folded, leaving it haunted by the death of print.





## BEETLEJUICE

1988 (USA)

Winter River, the town where Barbara and Adam Maitland decide to settle, is a typical New England locale. Although technically set in Connecticut, the actual location for the film was East Corinth, Orange County, Vermont, which is fine, because the two states are basically the same. The mason hall doubled for the school, and director Tim Burton allegedly made slight changes to the buildings that were used in the films. The interiors were built at Culver City Studios in California.

## THE EXCORCIST

1973 (USA)

In yet another reminder that movies are all just a big bad lie, the McNeil house, located at 36000 Prospect Street, 36th Street NW, near the Potomac River, Georgetown, Washington DC is not at all like the house in the movie. This includes the window from the poster. The house itself is fairly small, and an extra wing and attic were added for exterior shots and to bring Reagan's room closer to the steps. In real life, you would need to throw someone 40 feet. Famously, the shooting of the film was considered by some of the crew to be cursed: the interiors that were constructed in Ceco Studios in New York had to be rebuilt because of a fire. Director William Friedkin even asked a priest to exorcise the set to calm the crew. The flight of steps that connect Prospect Street with M Street, however, is authentic and you can hop down them. Just tread carefully.

1408

2007 (USA)

The adaptation of the Stephen King novel about the evil hotel room 1408 used the exterior of the Roosevelt Hotel, at 45 E. 45th Street, Manhattan, New York, NY. The Hotel was also used in classics like the *French Connection*, *Wall Street* and *Maid in Manhattan*. London's Reform Club was used for the lobby and the haunted room itself was constructed in Pinewood Studios.

## THE CHANGELING

1980 (CANADA/USA)

Peter Medak's horror film starring George C Scott, about a composer haunted by the ghost of a little boy, is set in an old Victorian estate in Seattle, but was actually constructed as an exterior for \$200,000 in Vancouver. This was due to the fact that none of the mansions surveyed suited the director's vision. The insides were built in-studio. The house that inspired the film was actually located in Cheesman Park, Denver, Colorado, where Russell Hunter claimed to have found a ghost of a little boy who was replaced once he died so that his parents could inherit a fortune. The facts of the case were disputed, but the story was good enough to become a film. The house was later demolished.

## [REC]

2007 (SPAIN)

The apartment building in which the characters of Jaume Balagueró and Paco Plaza's found footage horror are trapped is located at 34, Rambla de Catalunya, near the Passeig de Gràcia metro. Steer clear of old ladies and camera crews.









WORDS BY NICK PINKERTON  
ILLUSTRATION BY OLIVER STAFFORD

# REIGN IN BLOOD

***LWLies* offers a potted stage  
and screen history of the red stuff.**

**T**he first film was a very good professional piece of cine, looked like it was done in Hollywood... Soon our dear old friend, the red, red vino on tap. The same in all places like it's put out by the same big firm, began to flow. It was beautiful.

It's funny how the colours of the real world only seem really real when you viddy them on a screen."

– Alex, *A Clockwork Orange*

We are so accustomed to having the red vino on tap today that we may sometimes forget that it didn't always flow so freely, and that the history of stage blood begins relatively late in the story of drama. The most famous act of violence in Greek tragedy occurs in Sophocles's *Oedipus the King* (c 429 BC), when the title character discovers the corpse of Jocasta, wife and mother in one body, and uses pins from her dress to gouge out his own eyes. The act itself, however, transpires off-stage, leaving it to the chorus to describe it: "...And the bleeding eyeballs gushed and stained his beard – no sluggish oozing drops / but a black rain and bloody hail poured down."

Off-stage violence was a tradition in Greek theatre, demanded in part by the limitations of contemporary stagecraft, though through the millennia ahead great strides would be made in graphically visualising "black rain and bloody hail." Director Anthony Mann staged a blinding scene of his own in his 1950 feature *The Furies*, an Elektra complex drama set on the American plains, eliminating everything but the actual moment of contact in showing Barbara Stanwyck dashing a pair of scissors into the face of Judith Anderson, a rival for her father's affections. Along with contemporaries Phil Karlson, Sam Fuller and Robert Aldrich, Mann, whom critic Manny Farber once memorably described as a "tin-can De Sade" with "an original dictionary of ways to punish the human body," pushed the envelope for explicit violence as far as anyone in his day – his 1949 *Border Incident*, a film about attempts made to curb Mexican immigrants entering into the US, included a scene in which an undercover agent is run over by a tractor-drawn disc harrow, which is rather, uh, harrowing.





Mann, in the few interviews he gave, justified his use of graphic violence by reference to the Renaissance theatre, citing the Duke of Gloucester's blinding with spurs in 'King Lear' (1606) as a precedent. Mann's cycle of Western tragedies referred back to the period which had produced such high body-count works as Thomas Kyd's 'The Spanish Tragedy' (1585), Shakespeare's 'Titus Andronicus' (1594), George Peele's 'The Battle of Alcazar' (1602?), and Cyril Tourneur's 'The Revenger's Tragedy' (1607), though scholars are somewhat divided on what, precisely, contemporary staging of carnage consisted of – real bladders of pig blood being uncorked, perhaps, or strategically concealed red handkerchiefs and ribbons which would represent fresh wounds when unfurled at the appropriate moment in stage combat. The sticking (sticky?) point would appear to be the impossibility of laundering doublets and mopping up a gore-spattered stage between frequent performances.

The theatre through the better part of the 17th and 18th centuries was relatively tame, though anyone with a taste for carnage could distract themselves with the Thirty Years' War or the Second Hundred Years' War, which taken altogether ate up a good bit of time. Not until the appearance of Gothic

fiction and the relatively pacific Victorian Age were the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods matched in their passion for morbid spectatorship. Sweeney Todd, the cutthroat villain of penny dreadful 'A String of Pearls' (1847-48), was slashing throats in person at Hoxton's Britannia Theatre within months of his first appearance on the printed page. (The jet of carotid spurt and trap-door drop has purportedly been a staple of Sweeney Todd stagings from this period down to Sondheim.) Only a couple of years after Auguste and Louis Lumiere held their first public screening of their motion picture "actualities" at Le Salon Indien du Grand Café, Le Théâtre du Grand-Guignol, a playhouse specialising in macabre subject matters, opened its doors in nearby Pigalle. The Grand-Guignol was infamous for its ingenious staging of mutilations, trepannings, and disembowelments. Their recipe for stage blood, a mixture of glycerin and carmine, was highly praised for its authenticity, said to congeal and scab over before the spectator's eyes, just like the genuine item.

From here, to hear it from most tellings, the trail goes cold, and modern film violence begins with Bosco Chocolate Syrup swirling down the drain in Alfred Hitchcock's 1960 *Psycho*. This belies a particularly blinkered, Western view





of the question, for Toshiro Mifune being pincushioned with arrows in the climax of 1957's *Throne of Blood*, Akira Kurosawa's joining of the Elizabethan tragedy and Japanese Noh and Kabuki traditions – every bit as bleak as the Renaissance tragedy – is startlingly point-blank brutal, and anyone who believes that the “aestheticisation of violence” began when Jean-Luc Godard made his oft-repeated statement that the spilt blood in his 1965 film *Pierrot Le Fou* wasn't blood but “red” might benefit from stepping outside of the Occidental purview.

The classic formula for blood in black-and-white productions in Golden Age Hollywood was chocolate syrup and glycerine, doled out sparingly by the studios. The exceptions to this only prove the rule, such as the evocative image of spilt blood seeping under the door in Jacques Tourneur's 1943 film *The Leopard Man*. (Jacques, incidentally, is no relation to The Revenger's Tragedy's Cyril.) While one might presume that the Motion Picture Production Code was responsible for cossetting screen violence in American pictures, it seems to have left some leeway in the matter. The Hays Code makes passing reference to “Brutality and possible gruesomeness,” “Apparent cruelty to children and animals,” “Branding of people or animals,” and “Surgical operations,” stating

that “special care be exercised in the manner in which the following subjects are treated,” but it is nowhere near as forbidding on the subject of screen violence as it might be – then as now, creative murder is the transgression that American censors find it easiest to overlook.

It is true enough, nevertheless, that movie violence changed in the '60s, and the various tints that have travelled under the name “blood red” became more central elements of the filmmaker's palette. Le Théâtre du Grand-Guignol finally closed its doors in 1964, for a number of reasons, undoubtedly, though on a symbolic level this may appear like their admission of having finally been superseded by the movies. In the UK, the most high-profile purveyors of cinematic bloodletting were Hammer Studios, whose house red, noted for its tempera brightness tending towards pink, was supplied by one John Tynegate, a retired pharmacist living in Abbotsbury, Dorset. It is this formula which earned the moniker “Kensington Gore”, named for a pair of streets on either side of Albert Hall, although subsequently the term has become a catchall for all Made in Britain gore substitutes, such as Dempsey's Stage Blood. (It should be added that Worcestershire Sauce can do the job in a pinch.)





In his autobiography 'Renegade', The Fall frontman Mark E Smith remembers the heyday of Dr Tynegate's Kensington Gore: "Whatever you say about Hammer Horror films, at least everybody used to have a good laugh. I used to watch them and go 'Aaarrgghh!' when Dracula appeared. If you did that now you'd be booted out, people take it so seriously. When characters used to get shot, we'd shout out, 'That's a lot of tomato ketchup, that!' and the audience would laugh. Nowadays people think it's art." Monty Python also found the new license for explicit carnage good for a larf, exhibiting a Guignol side with such sketches as "Sam Peckinpah's Salad Days", in which a garden party suddenly and surreally becomes a veritable Trafalgar fountain of spouting sanguine fluid.

The machine gun disintegration of the title characters at the close of Arthur Penn's 1967 *Bonnie and Clyde* and the murder ballet concluding Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* from 1969 are generally regarded as the bloodshed watersheds of '60s American cinema, though gore had been on its way into the mainstream for some time, as horror and action movies began to follow the lead provided by EC horror comics and Men's Adventure "sweats" in the previous decade. Herschell Gordon Lewis, a marketing guru, rank opportunist, and accidental artist based in Chicago, had made a tidy profit in "nudie cutie" titillations after joining forces with Southern carny barker and producer David F. Friedman, but this was nothing compared to the fortune they reaped from 1963's *Blood Feast*, a Sweeney Todd-influenced tale in which the villain is Fuad Ramses, a Miami caterer whose specialty is an "Egyptian feast" made from the body parts of butchered women. Lewis got his blood custom-made by Barfred Laboratories (yes, really) of Coral Gables, though perhaps the film's most infamous scene, in which a woman's tongue is wrenched out by the root, required a beef tongue obtained from an area slaughterhouse. (This recalls some theories on the original stagings of *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus Andronicus*, both of which include severed tongues – some have suggested that the actors would hold a lamb's tongue in their mouths to be spat up at the proper moment.)

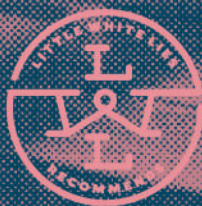
Graphic on-screen violence was pursued with ever-greater ardor and ingenuity through the 1970s, and everyone developed their own preferred shade of blood. For 1978's *Dawn of the Dead*, director George A Romero insisted on using a magenta blood provided by the 3M Company of

Minneapolis, MN, best known for their manufacture of Scotch tape, over the objections of his special-effects master Tom Savini – Romero, a devotee of horror comics who would later make the EC-indebted *Creepshow* from 1982, liked the level of Pop Artifice that the almost fluorescent gore gave his production. (3M's other claim to fake blood fame was providing the stage blood drooled out by KISS's Gene Simmons in the band's Grand-Guignol stage show.) The colour of the blood itself is only one part of the equation, the other being the other colours in the frame, which only a handful of directors took care to control – Pier Paolo Pasolini made this precise point while preparing his first colour film in 1967, none other than *Oedipus Rex*. One of the most indelible splatter images that I know of comes from Romano Scavolini's 1981 video nasty *Nightmare a/k/a Nightmares in a Damaged Brain*, a flashback to a murder that the protagonist committed as a child in which the blonde boy, going to town on his father and his father's mistress with a fire axe, douses his milkman-white getup with an apron of gore that registers like a wet lipstick smack against the subdued gray background of the bedroom walls. (A version of this effect was done to maximum banality in 2005's *Sin City*.)

Perhaps more typical of the '70s – and still something of a standard today – was the recipe whipped up by Dick Smith, used in such films as *The Godfather*, *The Exorcist*, and *Taxi Driver*. It consisted of white corn syrup, red and yellow Ehlers food colouring, methyl paraben, and Kodak Photo-Flo – toxic, but necessary in providing the proper viscosity. After Smith's death in 2014, Greg Nicotero, *The Walking Dead*'s makeup artist, was widely quoted saying "I've always based my blood on Dick Smith's formula. His blood has always been the staple of the industry. It's one of those things where if ain't broke, don't fix it."

This has not stopped contemporary FX artists. The most recent development is the scattering of fat CGI jellybeans to accompany a killshot, a direct descendant of the bull's eye confetti of pixels in first-person shooters from Wolfenstein 3D onward, as in the litany of brainpan splats which make up *John Wick*. ("I miss latex 'n' squibs," a friend wrote me after watching 2014's *Sabotage*, "This cartoon blood just leaves me cold.") It's a discouraging development, but hopefully just a detour in the ongoing history of building a better bloodbath ☹️





MUBI  X Little White Lies

Presents

# DOUBLES

#2

Two films inspired by Guillermo del Toro's *Crimson Peak*

## Jean Cocteau's *Beauty and the Beast* + Georges Franju's *Eyes Without a Face*

Mexican director Guillermo del Toro is outspoken when it comes to the classic movies that have directly inspired his artistic process. And when he does namedrop a Hitchcock here or a James Whale there, it's generally quite easy to see how this inspiration has taken seed with his own rich and singular oeuvre. We have selected two films of which he regularly professes a great love: Jean Cocteau's *Beauty and the Beast* from 1946 and Georges Franju's *Eyes Without a Face* from 1960. This pair of romantic horror movies are to be viewed as a double bill, the former screening on MUBI for 30 days, the latter receiving a one-off event presentation at LWLies' 71a gallery on Thursday 15 October with themed refreshments, del Toro-inspired decoration and a post-film panel discussion.

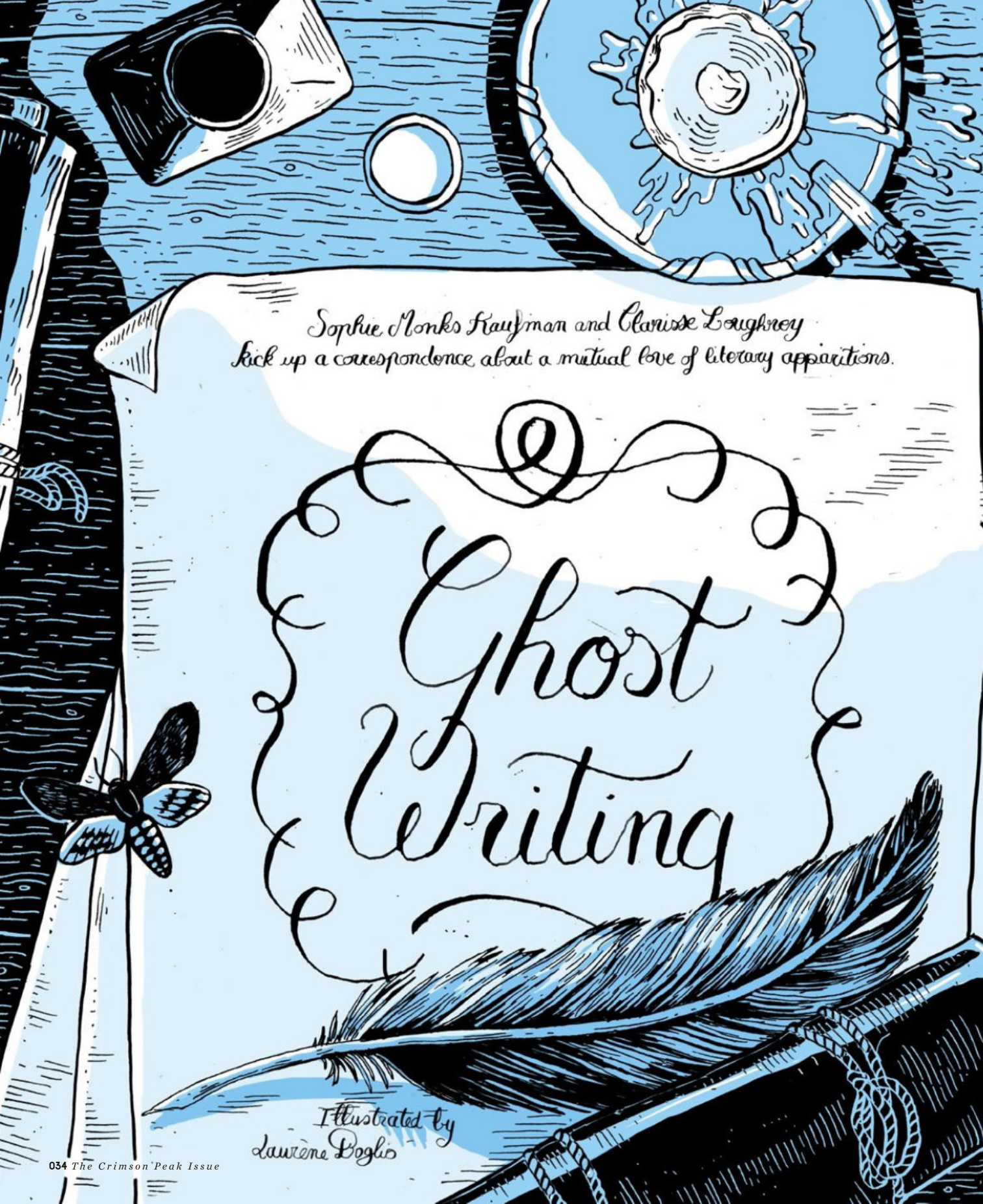
Aside from the technical innovations present in both films – from inter-dimensional camera trickery in the Cocteau and shockingly curt gore effects in the Franju – both films offer intriguing and nuanced takes on what it means to be an evildoer in cinema. In *Eyes Without a Face*, the

master surgeon Génessier takes ethically dubious steps to restore his daughter to her former beauty after she is disfigured in a car accident. The horrors of his method may be self-evident, but we question their validity because they are benefiting another. Or are they? From where does Génessier's obsession with his daughter and his desperate lust for physical perfection stem?

*Beauty and the Beast* is a plush, lightly experimental version of Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont's classic fairytale from 1756, with the lantern-jawed leading man Jean Marais playing the misbegotten Beast (a physical manifestation of evil from the vantage point of the characters in the film), and the blonde-locked dandy Avenant (one of the main antagonists from the vantage point of the audience). Both films suggest that men (always men) who are driven to enact wicked deeds often do so with a benign justification. As del Toro himself poetically put it, these films present, "mad, fragile love clinging for dear life in a maelstrom of darkness."

LWLies and MUBI present a series of movie Doubles – live events and 30 day online streams which highlights some of our favourite movies and directors from across the globe. Head to [littlewhitelies.co.uk](http://littlewhitelies.co.uk) and [mubi.com](http://mubi.com) for more info.





*Sophie Monks Kaufman and Clarisse Loughrey  
kick up a correspondence about a mutual love of literary apparitions.*

# Ghost Writing

*Illustrated by  
Laurence Doglio*



Dear Clarisse,

It's going to be surreal being in touch with you on a daily basis. My communication style tends to go 'burst of something' 'silence' 'burst of something' 'silence'. People, in all their wilfulness and complexity, exhaust me and I'm jealous of everyone who finds it such a breeze to be social all the time.

A confession! And nothing to do with ghost stories either. I will need to switch up my reading in order to be on message. At the moment I am reading a book about the colour blue. At a stretch it could be called a ghost story because, insofar as it's about anything other than the colour blue, it's about the ghost of a relationship. It proceeds via numbered points. I opened it on a random page and was met with a reference to ghosts:

"134. It calms me to think of blue as the colour of death. I have long imagined death's approach as the swell of a wave – a towering wall of blue. You will drown, the world tells me, has always told me. You will descend into a blue underworld, blue with hungry ghosts, Krishna blue, the blue faces of the ones you loved. They all drowned, too. To take a breath of water: does the thought panic or excite you? If you are in love with red you slit or shoot. If you are in love with blue you fill your pouch with stones good for sucking and head down to the river. Any river will do."

It's all like this: very dense and melancholy. I am reading it in small chunks.

What do you think? How are you? What are you reading?

Yours beneath the ache of existence,

Sophie

Dear Sophie,

It seems oddly fitting to talk about that kind of self-imposed isolation and then flit so easily into the world of spirits. I know I'm guilty of it as well, I'm sure so many are. But there can be something sort of frightening (and exhausting, as you say) about the world of others, and so comforting about keeping to one's self. It's that cruel trick of existence: you can stand in a room crowded with people, talk and laugh with equal measure, but feel like your words just float past each other's heads. You feel like you're speaking some foreign language. Or like you're a thousand miles down in the sea. Sometimes, I imagine that's what it feels like to be dead.

Which is surprising, then, that I'd never considered blue as the colour of death. I suppose I was too wrapped up in medieval notions: red blood, or the blackness of night enclosing like a shroud. But blue makes sense; if one were to believe in the existence of ghosts. 'A blue underworld' – that feeling, sitting at the bottom of the sea, knowing that somewhere far above at the water's surface is everything, and everyone, you once loved and cherished. That irreparable distance; that's what I imagine a phantom existence would consist of. If it does, indeed, exist. Which begs the question, Sophie: do you believe in ghosts?

I am well; apart from an odd nip in the air. I should perhaps close my window.

Yours at the raven's call,

Clarisse



Dear Clarisse,

You describe individual disconnection from the masses so well that it's like your shooting a flare out of one of the lonely rooms in woman's nature (c/o Edith Wharton).

I don't believe in ghosts in the Derek Acorah way. I like the delicious sensuality of ghost stories and process them on a metaphorical level, e.g. 'The Tell-Tale Heart' is so perfectly a tale of guilt-induced madness.

It's really uncool but the thing Paolo Coelho talks about in 'The Alchemist' as "the language of the world" is a concept that I understand. There is no way for people that I have lost to communicate with me except for in sensory ticks that come out of nowhere to remind me of them. I recognise that this susceptibility is largely a function of memory and grief, rather than my equivalent of Patrick Swayze in Ghost bearing a message, but that is only after intellectualisation. At the point where I am suddenly overwhelmed with the impression of, say, my mother, it feels supernatural. I will feel intertwined with her in a way that I'm not with the living beings around me. This creates a feeling of having one foot out of the door of the real world. Being – as self-help gurus say – "present" is not particularly easy, especially if we fill our heads with films and books and flights of fancy. This comes back to thing you said in your first par about the comfort of keeping to yourself and building your own reference library of meaning. As the culture that we consume in isolation is created by other humans, I like to think that reading, film watching, etc is a convoluted form of social bonding. Why be at the mercy of whoever happens to be around? Why not pick from the best minds in history, even if the authors of these works are long dead and now just ghosts in the machine of culture?

That's a mad thought and we all need warm meatsacks around to touch and talk to. When do you stand on ghosts and meatsacks? Do you tend to prefer one to the other?

Yours with rabid attraction  
Sophie

Dear Sophie,

I'm glad you found some form of connection in my descriptions; I'm so aware of how odd and ~~intangible~~ a topic this is. Sitting in separate rooms trying to describe the essence of being (and not being) to each other. I'm so sorry to hear that you've suffered loss, especially of your mother. I lost mine too, but there's something about the manner in which you describe that sensation of being intertwined with one beyond the physical; it makes death sound merely transient. No longer loss, but of a change of scenery. I take a huge amount of comfort in that idea, and in your letter.

I wonder, though, whether I've ever quite felt the connection you describe. Not in that total sense. I know I fear death to an unnatural degree; perhaps that's brought me an unconscious feeling of finality. One that no sense of memory or grief could hope to surpass. Sometimes, I think of it like the Sistine Chapel: God and Adam reach out to each other, but their fingers are destined never to touch. I guess it returns my thoughts to that image of being at the bottom of the sea: present, but not entirely present. Which I realise is a horrendously gloomy way to think of it.

But, yet, perhaps the closest I've come to experiencing that supernatural sense of connection is in the cultural consumption you write of; now, that's a fascinating thought! That by opening a book, pressing play on a movie: we're in fact summoning ghosts! Creating tunnels of communication with beings not in our very presence. It's true that in reading Wharton, or in watching Kubrick, I sense that I know them better than acquaintances I see in flesh and in blood. So perhaps, at the end of the day, I do prefer ghosts to meat sacks?

yours phantasmagorically,

Clarisse



Dear Clarisse,

What an eerie coincidence that you lost your mother too. I'm sorry. How long has it been? I like to talk about mine when the space is right because it puts a part of her back in the world, although I suspect that the cost is to put a part of me out of it. My mother was called Pieta after Michelangelo's 'Pieta', the same Michelangelo who painted the Sistine Chapel, fuelling your sad and beautiful analogy.

I have raided my housemate's stash of Daphne Du Maurier. Have you ever read 'The Doll'? It's the title short story of a collection by Du Maurier. These stories walk a line between being about the supernatural and being about human mystery and misery. I find her, Poe and the gang more thrilling than chilling. The focus tends to be on sadness and psychological elements that tickle my brain and heart rather than wherever the fear centre is.

Yes! You prefer ghosts to meat sacks! That pleases me for some reason. I think that these creative ghosts can never disappoint you by offering up a banal real-life encounter. All they have left us is the best of themselves. What we're doing right now is confusing because our writing is thoughtful and creative and (to me) cathartic but then we are both still meat sacks who will meet again and probably won't be able to aim for this same otherworldly level of communication. Generally I find that with writing I can present a more delicate creature than the plodding awkward physical being that humbles through life. Do you find the same thing? Is everyone both a divine spirit and a plodding meatsack within one body?

Yours from Bedfordshire

Sophie

Dear Sophie,

It's been, I suppose, what would constitute as a 'long time' since my mother died; eight years now. How long has it been for you? I do rarely talk of her. I hope not because of active suppression, but perhaps because the memories can feel more sacred when kept to myself. That said, it feels cathartic too, now; it can be so difficult to express those feelings, those manners of being, that it may take more than one mind to find the right words. I feel like we're doing a pretty good job though, for meatsacks. I do feel like I understand those sensations of time and space; about losing a part of yourself to the past. I've spent a lifetime being told to look always, forever towards the future. As if to live in the past is such a terrible thing, yet it's difficult when those you cherish exist only within the past. Pieta's such a beautiful name. I remember seeing what must have been a copy in a museum in Florence; I'd never before been filled with such empathy and emotion for a slab of carved stone.

It's interesting; your perspective enjoyment of supernaturalism is perhaps quite perpendicular to mine! Yet, in the words of Edith Wharton herself, hidden within the introduction to a collection of haunting tales: "No, I don't believe in ghosts, but I'm afraid of them." Indeed, reading those words only furthered my adoration of her work; it's the perfect descriptor. Though every measure of my logical faculties tells me the proposed existence of white-sheeted phantoms is absurd, ghost stories are a constant reminder that my knowledge is not absolute. There will always be doubt; earthly mysteries that my feeble-minded brain may never be able to grasp. Suddenly I feel very small, vulnerable. A sensation both terrifying, and so absolutely thrilling.

What a perfect way to sum up the human race: as both divine spirit and plodding meatsack, all in one body! I often dread meeting people who know me primarily through my writing, as nothing about my clownish manner or debilitating awkwardness suggests I'd ever be able to write in anything resembling semi-coherence. I find it so difficult to imagine these creative ghosts ever capable of such banality as I possess; which makes it hard to find any drop of promise in my own writing, not when there's such a canyon-like distance between myself and the graces of Dorothy Parker. Could she ever be susceptible to the meatsack ways? Or Du Maurier? I find it so hard to see them as anything but divine spirit.

Yours in abject terror, Clarisse





Dear Clarissa,

One of the films I watched this weekend was Pan's Labyrinth. It's more of a fantasy film than a ghost story per se but the imagery and ambience makes it seem to straddle both genres. The first time I watched it I was alone in a house with leaking pipes and can still remember the feeling of abject terror that ran amok inside me. The Captain is brutality incarnate. Where he goes, a halo of fear follows. Characters that could fuck you up with the worst pain imaginable and then calmly carry on with their day are more haunting than any ghost. I just read 'The Lady's Maid's Bell', which is the first story in 'The Ghost Stories of Edith Wharton'. As usual, the ghost therein had compassion. I could imagine trusting her and listening to her. Not so, The Captain.

Eight years is 'quite a long time' but anyone that has experienced grief knows that it doesn't respect conventional timelines. The best description I have heard refers to it as a spiral. When it first happens the circles are so tight that you never have any respite but then the circles become wider to the point that when you feel it anew it's an astonishing ambush. What was your mother's name? It's been five years for me. Just long enough to have made my peace with the reality of her absence. Death is such a cliché and suffering is such a cliché and the worst of it is that nothing about going through it makes you special. The reverse, in fact. We are just meatsacks going through what meatsacks go through, desperately weaving words in the hope that we'll chance upon some profound combination that will elevate our experiences

Haha! You have a talent for self-deprecating humour. When we imagine cultural ghosts it tends to be consistent with the image presented in their work. Like, it's easy to imagine that Dorothy Parker was dispatching zingers all day/every day. I guess there are people that are totally consistent on and off the page. But then, equally, I guess there are people for whom writing is an expression of a self that cannot be accessed while muddling through social encounters. I doubt if Kafka was entertaining colleagues by laying bare his perspective on bureaucratic madness while working days in an insurance company. And as the, ahem, famous saying goes, "If it's good enough for Kafka..."

Yours Tantalisingly

Sophie





Dear Sophie,

Oh, yes! Pan's Labyrinth is a beloved favourite of mine. A film so hopeful in a moment of infinite tragedy. Even amongst such horrors, it finds an end possessing such precious beauty. I've always preferred Spanish cinema's ghost stories for those reasons; they appear so articulate, so poetically in tune with all the grief and denial which stirs beneath any clinging belief to the supernatural. Far better than so many of their American brethren, at least. That said, I do agree that 'ghost story' – or 'horror' – seems such an odd fit for Pan's Labyrinth; and do wonder whether it's because of The Captain. As you say, the terror of The Pale Man feels at such a distance when there stands a man of flesh who swings a weapon of such unspeakable cruelty; the weight of every evil fascism is capable of.

My own experiences have certainly felt spiralling; thank you for such a fitting analogy. It's a peculiar feeling, when one of those sudden pangs springs up I feel almost guilty for having been so free of it for such an expanse of time. As if knowing I'm still capable of grief means I enact some disservice in not practising it. Do you ever feel this way, too? Reminding myself that I'm a meatsack experiencing all the normal ebbs and flows of human existence does manage to be both an entirely miserable notion, and a total relief. My mother's name was Valerie; it was one of those cruel tricks of the universe that she died the same year Amy Winehouse's cover was released. A strange, little sensation washes over whenever I hear it played; jubilation with overtones of past mourning.

Your comparison to the ghost of 'The Lady Maid's Bell' sparks a thought inside my head: are ghosts merely a distraction from what truly frightens us? The senseless violence of our fellow hominids? Ghosts equate to the search for ultimate resolution; they are beings of motivation, though their purpose is not often immediately clear. Wharton's ghost desires only to shed her phantom light on her mistress' extramarital affair, though I'm not sure whether I'd trust her as you would; her part in the affair, and her motivations for uncovering it remain elusive to me. Yet, unlike The Captain, I at least know this ghost has her reasons to haunt the living; he remains a representation of evil at its most incomprehensible. And just to think of him sends a shiver down my spine.

Your words ring so true, it seems impossible to think that the most skilled wordsmiths of history could possibly have possessed the same grace in presence. Otherwise, why escape to the page in the first place? If I ever find myself resisting the thought, I'll make sure to think of Kafka from now on; in some ill-fitting tweed suit attempting to explain to a bereaving couple that his company can simply not replace the priceless value of a deceased paraquet. I'll think of some fancifully banal image to remind myself that "if it's good enough for Kafka..."

If the saying does not exist, I rather think it should be christened as one.

Yours as mortal dust

Clarissa





GROCERY

194

RETAIL SPACE AV



# THE NEW DARK HOUSE

**LWLIES INVESTIGATES HOW HORROR MOVIES ALWAYS  
FIND A WAY OF REBUILDING THE GOTHIC CASTLE.**

**G**othic begins with a castle. Or more specifically, with 'The Castle of Otranto' (1764), subtitled (in its second edition) 'A Gothic Story', and set during the medieval era amongst the already crumbling stones of an Italian edifice. Gothic would grow from the foundations laid by Horace Walpole's romantic novel, acquiring along the way its characteristic storms and plagues and macabre murders, its dynastic/domestic curses and cobwebbed ruins, its vampires and ghosts, its mad scientists and errant aesthetes, its monsters disinterred from the mound – or the mind. Since the beginning, however, the very name of this sensationalist, grotesque genre has come with connections to both architecture and receding history. Cinema, medium of the preserved undead, would love it.

It is significant that Georges Méliès' *The Haunted Castle*, generally regarded as the first horror film, is named after, and set in, a mediaeval structure – as is Universal's first successful horror title, 1923's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, drawn from Victor Hugo's gothic novel from 1831. For the next quarter century, Universal would continue pillaging Gothic literature for its pantheon of movie monsters, followed in turn by Hammer and Roger Corman's famed cycle of Poe adaptations, including 1964's classic *The Masque of the Red Death*. Yet 'castle horror' belonged to an old world, and could seem as quaint and stuffy as its neglected interiors for the modern moviegoer.



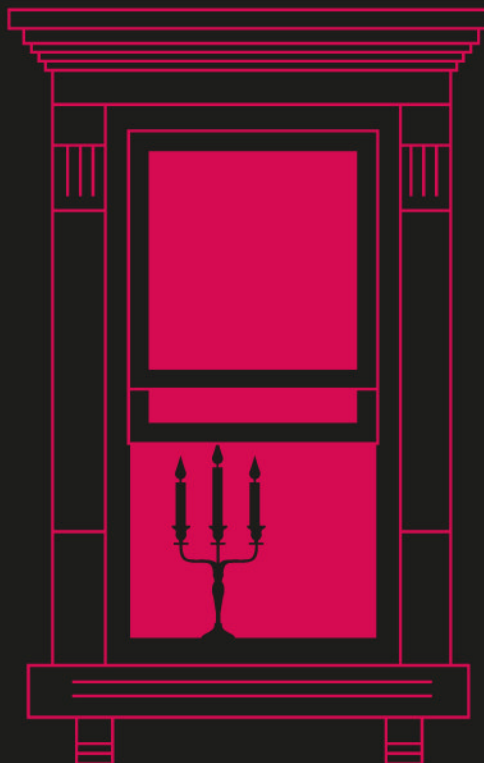
In the 1970s, the new Golden Age of horror was ushered in by two very different films from 1968 that radically changed the genre scene. Roman Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby* is a Gothic tale of rationalism in conflict with the supernatural – but it moved away from the castle in two rather different senses: first, because B-movie trickster/gimmickster William Castle, who had purchased the film rights to Ira Levin's 1967 novel in the hope that it would be his ticket to directing a prestige studio film, found himself relegated to the role of producer (and a brief cameo) when Paramount insisted that Polanski take the helm instead; and second, because the film's setting, though occupied by a cursed history and the odd hidden passageway, has been transferred from traditional gothic ruins to a residential building in contemporary Manhattan, where Rosemary and Guy Woodhouse (played by Mia Farrow, John Cassavetes) plan to transform an old(ish), unfurnished apartment into their modern family home.

The architecture of gothic could also be seen shifting in George A. Romero's low-budget monster movie *Night of the Living Dead*. For, although far removed from the dilapidated abodes of the European nobility, the Pennsylvania farmhouse that is the film's principal location becomes beleaguered by a veritable return of the repressed (in the form of 'ghouls' rising from the grave), even as it is made to accommodate contemporary concerns with the ongoing Vietnam war and civil rights conflict, and the gaping generational gap of the 1960s. Here Gothic could be seen obtaining new digs for new times.



This renovation would continue in the more peculiar abodes of backwoods America. Tobe Hooper's *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* from 1974 offered a form of southern gothic horror, as a line of slaughtermen redecorated their Texan farmhouse with their victims' skin and bones, and with the all-American mythology of Ed Gein. By the time of Marcus Nispel's remake, once again a terrifying dynastic family of mad Texans had taken up lodgings in a big old White House, and no-one could be certain of escaping their backward, aggressive whims in one piece. Accordingly, though formally still set back in 1973, this 2003 film managed to find room for push-button anxieties about its own Bush era. Sam Raimi's *The Evil Dead* from 1981 also found a new and now much imitated locus for its gothic play: the cabin in the woods. And in case you missed the gothic connection, the 1987 sequel reveals - and the 1992 trilogy closer more fully explores - a transdimensional portal leading directly from Eighties cabin to a medieval castle. The ancient demons of European history can, it seems, take possession of new places to live in the American hinterlands.

Alongside this there remained an American gothic of a more conventional, albeit renationalised, variety, where large addresses would preserve in their present a supernatural trace of their pre-20th-century history: the labyrinthine Overlook Hotel in *The Shining* from 1980 the Bell home in *An American Haunting* from 2005, Blackwood Manor in 2010's *Don't Be Afraid of the Dark*, or any number of other film 'properties' where the bad blood of native burial grounds, the ghosts of colonial days, and the crimes of previous generations, all come home to roost.



Of course, in traditional Gothic, castles were the preserve of royalty or the nobility, and their decaying stones were signifiers of an old social order's collapse before the concomitant rise of the bourgeoisie and the revolutionary mobbing of the working classes. Yet if few people actually live within crenellated fortifications, every man's (or woman's) home is their castle - and so it was the genius of films like John Carpenter's *Halloween* from 1978, Tobe Hooper's *Poltergeist* from 1982 and Wes Craven's *A Nightmare on Elm Street* from 1984 to relocate the delirium and death of gothic to cosy middle-class suburbia, where the uncanny (from the German *unheimlich*, or 'unhomely'), precisely in not belonging, was right at home. Now America, the heart of cinema's mainstream, had its very own domestic brand of gothic.

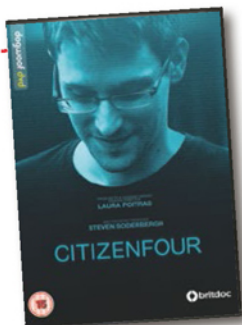
On the other side of the Atlantic, where gothic itself originated, a more traditional setting occasionally resurfaces, like the stately boarding school in 2011's *The Awakening*, Eel Marsh House in the retooled Hammer's *The Woman In Black* from 2012, and *Crimson Peak* in Guillermo del Toro's latest. Yet whether it is in the Poe-esque dungeons of 'torture porn', the haunted housing estates of 'hoodie horror', or the cursed technologies of J-, K- and T-horrors, 21st-century Gothic also keeps finding new places to reside, and to rewrite its own history 🍷



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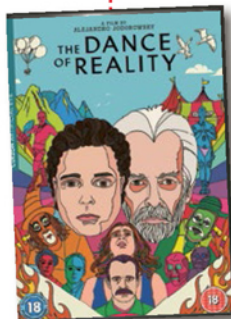
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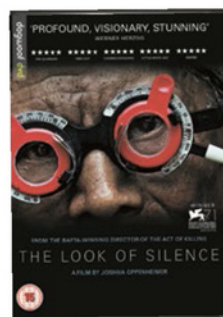
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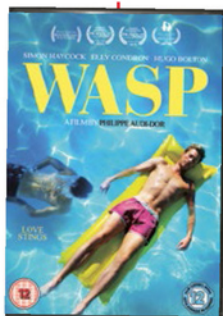
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# Horse Money

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Directed by  
**PEDRO COSTA**  
Starring  
**VENTURA**  
**ANTONIO SANTOS**  
**VITALINA VARELA**  
Released  
**18 SEPTEMBER**

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5

## ANTICIPATION.

*The Portuguese master's first fiction feature in almost a decade.*

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5

## ENJOYMENT.

*A beautiful and grotesque evocation of repressed cultural memory.*

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5

## IN RETROSPECT.

*One of the most impressive accomplishments of Costa's career.*

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**P**edro Costa's *Horse Money*, the Portuguese filmmaker's first fiction feature in over eight years, crescendos with an intensely cerebral 20-minute sequence set inside an elevator in which a flood of dialogue works to collapse an entire history's worth of personal and political tragedy in one virtuoso display of accumulated aggression. Undeniably bracing, the scene – a slightly reworked version of Costa's 2012 short *Sweet Exorcism* (originally featured in the *Centro Histórico* omnibus film) – is but the final and most violent example of the film's foremost allegorical conceit, that of indoor space as physical manifestation of repressed cultural memory.

In Costa's cinema, the act of representation is an act of exorcism in itself – or, as he put it in an interview with *Cinema Scope* magazine, a means to fully leave the past behind: "Some people say they make films to remember. I think we make films to forget."

It's a declaration as weary yet sober-minded as this film is unsurprising, especially in light of Costa's intimidating oeuvre, which carries the weight of both cultural and cinematic history in every deeply felt frame. Starring Ventura, the real-life Cape Verdean lead of this film's loose predecessor, 2006's *Colossal Youth*, as a lightly dramatised version of himself, Costa's latest follows his ever-enigmatic collaborator through a succession of scenes and settings with an air of the purgatorial – a sense which the director encourages and exaggerates by way of abstract narrative chronology and highly symbolic depictions of institutional spaces.

When we meet Ventura, he's lumbering down a dimly lit, cave-like corridor in his underwear, before awakening in a hospital bed surrounded by infantrymen who speak of the violence transpiring just beyond the walls of this unidentified sanitarium. Ventura is visibly sick. His hands shake, he struggles to walk. When he speaks he often returns to the memory of a horrific 1975 knife fight, from which he still bears physical and psychological scars. From here he proceeds to encounter many mysterious figures, each an apparent manifestation of a past friend, acquaintance, or colleague. The most striking of these is Vitalina, a fellow Cape Verdean transplant who has arrived for her husband's funeral, an event we never see but which is deliberated upon at length when she and Ventura meet on a rooftop in the dead of night, the only light emanating unnaturally from the windows of an adjacent apartment building.

It's evident in its elliptical presentation and somewhat episodic construction that *Horse Money*'s narrative transpires in a realm beyond traditional notions of reality. The film could thus be read any number of ways: as a portrait of the afterlife, or a death rattle hallucination, a vision

of Ventura as he passes from one existence to the next, or as a waking nightmare precipitated by years of unrelenting trauma. Whatever the interpretation, Ventura's journey feels inexorable, proceeding through a succession of spaces that are recognisable yet gutted of any tangible associations. Hospitals, catacombs, forests, warehouses – they functionally correspond to everyday conceptions of a troubled psyche, but fail to offer even the coldest of comforts.

The film's largely nocturnal settings and stark, chiaroscuro lighting design, coupled with the actors' ghostly incantations and generally defeated demeanours, suggest characteristics of the horror genre. Costa's affinity for the style's more *outré* practitioners – Jacques Tourneur, Edgar G Ulmer, Charles Laughton – has long been apparent (his debut feature, *O Sangue* from 1989, set its tale of sibling struggle in a monochromatic wasteland that could have easily been shot on midcentury studio sets). With *Horse Money*, however, such aesthetic inclinations reach new heights of expressionistic elegance. Costa frames each shot like a static mural, draping figures and objects in gulfs of darkness which spill forth from beyond the measure of the frame. These digital images, beautiful and grotesque, conjure a sense of apocalyptic grandeur at eye level, capturing dilapidated interiors at impossible angles and moonlit clearings with disarming austerity.

It all builds to the final encounter in the hospital elevator, in which an unknown, undead, unmoving solidier – a kind of living statue – speaks to Ventura through the voices of the dearly departed. A ghost of the Carnation Revolution and a cipher of Portugal's post-war industrial decimation, the soldier stands at the literal and figurative threshold of Ventura's spiritual transference. Where he's arrived and to where he'll proceed at the film's end is unclear, but the startling final image, in which Ventura and the weapon which so painfully haunts his memory find themselves stacked within the same cramped frame, suggest the wounds are far from healed. **JORDAN CRONK**











# I See A Darkness

**LWLies** talks to Portuguese director Pedro Costa about how his new film, *Horse Money*, offers ghostly echoes of his country's tumultuous modern history.

It's taken a little while to happen, but Pedro Costa is now a name that is as beloved as it is feared. It signals a certain type of cinematic experience, one that is active rather than passive. Costa grew up in Lisbon and studied film during the military coup of 1974, and much of his work subtly channels the seismic shifts caused by this event. His directorial debut, *O Sangue*, from 1989, was a statement of intent, enshrining his classical Hollywood heroes – Fritz Lang, Edgar Ulmer, Howard Hawks – through its angular style and mode. Later, he produced a trilogy – 1997's *Ossos*, 2000's *In Vanda's Room* and 2006's *Colossal Youth* – which home ents label The Criterion Collection handily coined as 'Letters from Fontainhas', a reference to the slum suburb in which the films' action takes place. His latest work, *Horse Money*, is based around the life of a Cape Verdean immigrant named Ventura (who was also the "star" of *Colossal Youth*) as he wanders around the crepuscular basement of hospital, fighting off the bitter memories of the revolution.

**LWLIES: THIS MAY SOUND LIKE A TRITE THING TO KICK THINGS OFF WITH, BUT I THOUGHT A LOT ABOUT LUBITSCH WHILE WATCHING HORSE MONEY, PARTICULARLY HEAVEN CAN WAIT.** Costa: Of course. Obviously, because of the elevator, but there's more than that. There's a lot of things actually. ageing, death... I thought about that film afterwards, especially because of the elevator. In *Heaven Can Wait*, the last line, he walks into the elevator and the guy says, 'Going down?' and says, 'No, going up!' In this film, the arrow is a red triangle and it is pointing down. So when he enters with the soldier, he's going down. It's those kind of things that formed my youth in the vulgar, lonely theatres of Lisbon. I saw it on the screen there. I had this amazing chance of having... a guy you've never heard of, which is a shame, as he's one of the greatest critic/writers in Europe over the last 40 years, João Bénard da Costa. He was the director of the Portuguese Cinematheque. He was one of my teachers at film school for the two years I was there. He taught history of cinema. In '77, he was doing these programmes of complete John Ford, complete Lubitsch, complete Ozu. They all had these amazing thick catalogues. Between '76 and '85 I saw everything. It's... heavy shit.

**DO YOU HAVE ANY ASSOCIATION WITH THE CINEMATHEQUE?** I know them. João Bénard died four years ago. He was a Langlois-like figure. Everyone says so. And it's the same with Peter von Bagh now. They all knew each other. I actually saw Langlois when I was really, really young. I was 13. Or 12? I was not a cinephile or anything. I was there with my father. It was a

presentation by João Bénard, with Rossellini himself, of *Rome, Open City*, in '73. The revolution in Portugal was '74. It was a big thing, and everyone sensed it was going to become something. We lived in a real kind of fascism. There was this 'event'. Rossellini was left, Catholic, oppositional, and he would mobilise everyone. So this theatre where I saw all the Fords is a 1,000-seat theatre. If you see things like *Stars in My Crown* in an almost-full 1,000-seat cinema, every day. I cannot understand what has happened. It's changed. Not only in Lisbon.

**HORSE MONEY OPENS WITH A SERIES OF BLACK-AND-WHITE PHOTOGRAPHS OF NEW YORK BY JACOB RIIS. AND THERE'S ONE COLOUR PICTURE IN THERE TOO.** It was just one that I liked. These come from the Museum of the City of New York where all the originals and the plates are. When I went, I asked them to explain the project, and then asked if I could take some. Riis printed the picture, then took a picture of the print and then painted it. There are lots of pictures that are black and white and sepia, and there's one in colour. His most famous picture depicts gangsters from Mulberry Hill. Guys with hats and sticks. The problem was that this thing with the photographs was very hard to edit.

**IN TERMS OF THE ORDER IN WHICH TO RUN THEM?** Not just the order. But it's that thing where every conceivable order you try tells some kind of story. Some you want, some you don't want. It's the pure principal of editing. When you're working with these still images, you put one, you put two, and oh! the baby is dying. There is no baby! Editing is pure fantasy and imagination when working with those materials.

**THE PENULTIMATE IMAGE IS IN COLOUR.** The main thing I wanted is giving the audience something that they probably don't know, and I think that's something that's come from my masters. Recently people talk about Riis, but he's one of those photographers you don't really see. People have Cartier-Bresson or Robert Frank in their houses. Not this guy. The social element is maybe a bit heavy. The idea was to have him there with us in the film. I think he has a part in the story of this world. Of course he has. Then I began thinking about this ending. I always thought that the first thing would be that he walks and presents himself and be caught, be brought by the police to this dungeon/hospital/prison... What I always see is prisoners. That's what I see. It could give a special mystery to Ventura going down. I don't think you can read that place as a hospital. It's a prison in an old film.





**IT HAS THAT JAMES WHALE FEEL.** Yes. And I think the photographs help.

**BUT THEN YOU CUT FROM THE PHOTOGRAPHS TO A PAINTING.** Yes! The painting was there. I've not talked about the painting before. I saw it by chance in a museum in Lisbon, it's a museum nobody goes to. It's not really a museum. It's the last king's house. When I was shooting *Colossal Youth* or one of the shorts or something, we liked to do some other stuff. Sometimes we would go to the zoo, to museums, to the park. It's important. It needs to be a part of our way of work. When he's at those places, Ventura says some things that he doesn't tell us when we're shooting. Sitting around in the zoo, watching the camels, he says other stuff.

**ARE YOU TRYING TO DRAW THIS STUFF OUT OF HIM?** It's never the intention, no. Even if I'm not shooting or doing 'cinema', we are working. Like everyone. Monday and Tuesday, we maybe go until 10 or 11, but we maintain a routine. I know Ventura had a routine, before he returned. Vitalina had it in France, she's the cleaning lady. It's not an artistic routine. It's something boring and not very nice. It's getting up and going to work. Sometimes we don't go to work there, we go see some stuff. I do my work on my own. I think one of those tricks... We went to this palace and Ventura was with us. In that kind of place he gets a bit bored. He was sitting around, the others were seeing other stuff. I saw this painting. It's signed, but the frame covers it up.

**IT HAS A PLAQUE AT THE BOTTOM.** But that's new. It was probably 2007 or 2008 when I saw it. I knew a little bit about this style. They're called things like 'studies of hats', 'studies of negroes', that kind of thing. Reubens used to do lots of these. This one seemed strange. I asked the guy there who it was by, and nobody knew. One guy mailed me saying they were 99 per cent sure it was a painting by Géricault. A very famous French painter. He has a painting called 'The Raft of the Medusa'. When I went back, I saw it again,

and it stayed with me. I thought the subject was a slave or a valet. Maybe a slave who bought his freedom. One day I said that it should be good for the beginning of the film. Like a first line. When I went back to shoot it they had got a new frame and had inscribed Géricault on there. They said that they had to say it, because having a name makes it important. More people will come. I thought it would be okay. Some sort of movement that goes from Riis, to the painting and colour.

**RIGHT AFTER THAT PAINTING THERE'S A SHOT WHERE THE CAMERA MOVES OFF IT, AND IT'S WEIRD TO SEE THE CAMERA MOVE IN ONE OF YOUR FILMS.** It's supposed to be weird. For me, it means a lot of things. It's just movement. It's very nice. Like Baudelaire says, "It's bizarre, it's beautiful." It's unexpected, too. It seemed like a nice beginning, like we're leaving that stuff behind. We move to what I thought would be the present, even if this is a dungeon. Then there's this guy in this corridor who is in a state of anxiety.

**A FEW PEOPLE HAVE SAID THIS IS A HORROR MOVIE.** That doesn't worry me. You could say it's a horror film of a different type. It's rooted in things that are known by people who have seen films or have read novels or even heard some music. Everything is there. It's okay to say. I have no objection. What will you do with this 'horror' movie? Does it work like the films you're thinking of or about? Does it have the same effect? I'm not talking about about the '40s and '50s classical horror films, but something more contemporary. Does it work as a contemporary horror film? I would actually like to have this answered from people writing about the film. Because I'm obviously not thinking about that while I'm filming it, doing it, rehearsing, writing. Yeah, there is that element, but is it like... *Insidious*? Have you seen *Insidious*? I have. Or *[Rec]*? Does it work in those terms? Does it make you afraid? I don't think so... This film doesn't work that way. It's a reference thing when you say 'horror film'. And it goes way back to



the '30s, Whale, Tourneur... It's too... I think the association with Tourneur is a bit exaggerated.

**YOU'VE TALKED ABOUT TOURNEUR IN THE PAST AND THE ASSUMPTION IS MADE THAT HE IS A REFERENCE POINT.** Sure. I cannot be a stranger to my film, but I would see a lot more Lubitsch and Fritz Lang. The idea was to not to leave too much space and time for people to think. We get to the next sequence. It's not a very fast film, but it goes deeper. The shot at the beginning is significant, we're going down with Ventura, down to the centre of the Earth, the centre of the self...

**OR BACK IN TIME.** Back in time. The problem for me is that people will see this film today, in the present.

**THE LAST SHOT OF COLOSSAL YOUTH HAS VENTURA LAYING ON A BED WITH A YOUNG GIRL. I THOUGHT THAT THIS FILM MIGHT BE HIS DREAM.** Oh no, don't think about that. I'm surprised that the other one ends like that and this one starts like this. The end shot of this film is... not peaceful. There's language, a new kind, our friend Godard would like that. Not in this one. It's a flash of something.

**WHY IS THE LAST SHOT OF THE FILM SO QUICK?** I need people to write about this film, to think about this film. As much as I thought making it. I don't yet have the contradiction. I cannot contradict you. Yet. Later tonight or tomorrow maybe? Maybe it escapes people in some way? There are details inside of this film that derange you and put you in a state of confusion. The biggest debate that I had – not quite a quarrel – was in New York, and it is that you have to have seen some stuff before you see this film. Well... perhaps you should have to have seen some stuff before you see any film? It's mainly to do with the Portuguese revolution – the details, the captains, the generals, the date, the stuff...

**IS THIS A FILM ABOUT HISTORY?** People don't need to read it like that. There's a sentimental thing going on. There's melodrama too. Probably two guys who got into a fight with razors, probably for some woman. Perhaps one of these guys is Ventura? The other guy you see might be the husband of the woman. Perhaps this guy is dead. Or maybe he's alive.

**ARE YOU EXPLAINING THE FILM HERE?** No, these are just the obvious things you can say about it. They talk about a period of time they are leaving, because it's the present. Something is happening with soldiers or military police. They talk about revolution three or four times. Movements in the streets. The work that stops. Factories that break down. The bosses that run away. It's a state of confusion for Ventura. It's a moment of confusion. It's the last script Jacques Tati wanted to do. With Sparks.

**DO YOU ONLY START EDITING WHEN YOU'VE SHOT EVERYTHING?** Yes. That's one of the reasons why I've changed from my formal classical training as a filmmaker. I was too slow, like Jean Renoir said. I needed time to think, to shoot, to rehearse. I still need this time. And now I have it. So when one moment is done, another moment starts. This film... I'm not saying it was edited faster, because it wasn't. It took from October 2013 through to June 2014. It was a little bit happier, let's say. Not easier. I think there's some music, or something musical about this film which I of course can't identify. It has to do with the voices. I tend to think that the sound and the voices guided this one a bit more.

**DO YOU HAVE A VISION OF WHAT A FILM IS GOING TO BE LIKE?** Not while we were shooting, because it's a very hard process. The elevator scene was very, very painful for Ventura especially. Every day it was very tough for him to be there. But the film has something that's a bit more mellow.

**DID VENTURA SAY THAT HE WANTED TO TALK ABOUT THIS PERIOD IN HIS LIFE?** Not that way. Every time he suggested or when he... for instance, the idea for the soldier in the elevator was because about six years ago he told us about this nightmare that he had about a figure chasing him and wanting to kill him. And then, weeks or months later, he told me that the nightmare involved a man in boots and a steel helmet. And then he said it was in an elevator in one of the hospitals, so I thought it was probably a doctor.

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## “We’re going down with Ventura, down to the centre of the Earth, the centre of the self...”

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**SO YOU'RE INTERPRETING HIS DREAMS?** Sure. So then I asked Ventura to draw this man. And he said, 'No, no, no.' So then I had to imagine it. But that made a strange and nice connection to something else. And that was the moment when he told me what happened at the time when he was afraid of losing his job because the revolution was on the march. Not only Ventura, but all his comrades. Most of the time they weren't working because of the confusion. They didn't know an enormous general strike was about to happen. Or he may have been scared that the soldiers would just plain kill them. He told me some stories of the left wing soldiers, the Sons of the People, about the nasty things they did at night in those neighbourhoods. I believe it. Young guys, they have jeeps, they have long hair, they are in power, they are re-enacting Cuba because they heard all about that, then they go through these neighbourhoods and see these two black guys playing cards, and they go up to them and they say, 'Hey, the revolution does not work like this'. And then they beat them. That's what Ventura told me. They wouldn't let them play cards. I thought the revolution was *about* cards. I was wrong. I got interested in that. I go so interested that I almost made a map of Lisbon and mapped where he was on certain dates. And then I mapped where I was – though my part was hard to remember. One or two days, it's very, very clear that's how it started. The 25 April. I was with my friends at a demonstration. We were following some soldiers. With some banners. He was hiding in a park. Every day of that year, '74, I tried to remember where I was and what I was doing. That's how it began.

**WHY DO YOU REMOVE YOURSELF FROM THIS STORY?** I'm not sure how to answer this. It's not removing. It's finding the place that I like. If you write something today for Channel 4, a screenplay... I know that my place in a screenplay is not the same as 90 per cent of the other filmmakers. I have to find my place. I remove myself a little bit. I adapt, I organise, I make a bit of collage, I do a bit of editing, I add a bit of colour. I imagine a lot of stuff. I try to be not very far from some kind of historical facts. In directing and scriptwriting and shooting, I'm trying to find my place. I don't know if myself or my colleagues can call ourselves directors if we are serious. We're at the mercy of a lot of things. When I hear someone talk about how they are controlling a film, I think they are lying. They should be lying. I'm not removing, I'm just trying to find my place. The problem is that it's much more difficult for me to find that place. I have this obsession about being very, very serious about the work, and if you're serious about the work, you're not a director. To answer your question seriously, I am a producer, I am not a director 🎬





# Mia Madre

Directed by

**NANNI MORETTI**

Starring

**MARGHERITA BUY**

**JOHN TURTURRO**

**NANNI MORETTI**

Released

**25 SEPTEMBER**

3

## ANTICIPATION.

*As the years pass by, the likelihood of Nanni Moretti returning to his early funny ones diminishes.*

3

## ENJOYMENT.

*Its scattershot approach lands some good moments.*

3

## IN RETROSPECT.

*Moretti is an old reliable, but he needs to be more than that.*

It's hard not to at the very least admire Nanni Moretti's self-imposed remit as a filmmaker who locates humour and levity in life's dimmest corners. 1993's beloved *Dear Diary* was the transitional work, the one that connected his more fancy-free, caustic and experimental early career with a second phase where he has gladly taken up the mantle of mass entertainer.

In its melancholy and reflective tone, plus an interest in the emotional ripples caused by the death of a family member (crucially, one who was roundly adored), the film that this new work, *Mia Madre*, most resembles is his Palme d'Or winner from 2001, *The Son's Room*, a sensitive reflection on how a person's existence can continue beyond physical expiration. In his capacity as an actor, Moretti himself hovers on the sidelines, playing the discreetly sanguine brother of lefty film director Margherita, played by Margherita Buy, whose work-life balance is all out of kilter. Their mother is seriously ill. Her days are numbered. This understandably makes the task of completing a rousing drama about a labour dispute all the more taxing – how is one able to concentrate on the fine art of personal expression when the spectre of death lingers in the air?

As much as we're sympathetic to the idea that life needs to stop when it comes to matters of mortality, Moretti also makes the point that it's sometimes difficult for us to second guess just how deeply others are quietly suffering. He achieves this in entertaining, if extremely inelegant fashion, by ushering in John Turturro's lunatic

American movie actor, Barry Huggins, whose overzealous passion for The Cinema gradually manifests itself as neediness and pretension. Turturro's performance is either love it or loathe it – there's no middle ground. His character is intended as a fond if grotesque caricature of preening actorly tics, and he seldom translates as a real person, more a composite of Moretti's own specific complications with unwieldy leading men. Yet, with just a few simple lines of dialogue, he's humanised as someone – like Margherita – who masks deep internal struggles behind a harried bravado and an eagerness to remain stern.

The best shot in the film is apropos of nothing, a long track down a queue that has formed outside an art cinema which ends up being revealed as a dream. The film is louche when it comes to time and memory, flashing back at will and entering into and out of Margherita's frazzled psyche. Attempts to form something of a more expressionistic, playful take on grief (or the uneasy feeling that anticipates grief) don't always work, and it's often too scattershot to truly hit home. The duelling storylines of the dying mother and the dying movie have very little overlap, which prompts the feeling that Moretti has decided to make a movie inspired by reality rather than invent a rich story that offers up relevance beyond the literal. One single shot of the madre's room post-departure, with books and affects in boxes, her Earthly legacy awaiting pick up and potential destruction, speaks louder and more eloquently than this earnest film as a whole. **DAVID JENKINS**





# Ricki and the Flash

Directed by

**JONATHAN DEMME**

Starring

**MERYL STREEP**

**KEVIN KLINE**

**MAMIE GUMMER**

Released

**4 SEPTEMBER**

2

## ANTICIPATION.

*Going by the trailer, it's a saccharine TV movie for "cool" boomers.*

3

## ENJOYMENT.

*Cute and easygoing with some laughs, but weighed down at times by cliché.*

3

## IN RETROSPECT.

*Enjoyable in its slightness, but unlikely to get Streep yet another Oscar nomination. See it with your mum.*

Coco Chanel once said, "Before you leave the house, look in the mirror and take one thing off." This dictum comes to mind while watching Meryl Streep in *Ricki and the Flash* – here is a woman of a certain age who is aggressive in her piled-on accessories and wild, partly braided hair. If anyone asked Ricki to take off an accessory, she'd likely laugh in their face.

Ricki embodies a certain type of woman not often given much time in cinema: she is not a regular mom, but a rock mom. A grocery store cashier by day and frontwoman of a bar rock band by night, she may not appear traditionally successful, but she gets by, a modest achievement that this enjoyable if predictable film sweetly celebrates. Drama strikes when Ricki gets a call from her ex-husband, Pete (Kevin Kline). Their daughter, Julie (Mamie Gummer), has just been ditched by her other half and has decided to return home in a state of severe depression.

Ricki heads to Pete's fancy Indiana house (curiously, Pete and his current wife's wealth is not explained, and seems to exist solely to provide a counterpoint to Ricki's ramshackle existence) and is thrust into familiar familial drama, laced with moments of easygoing humour. Julie feels dually frustrated by her broken relationship and her mother's sudden re-entry into her life, but it is Ricki who gets her out of the house and on the road to recovery. Streep, of course, has played any number of archetypal women, and this role often feels like one more variation on past greats. Seeing Streep interact with her real-life daughter,

though, adds a certain layer of emotional interest to the proceedings.

Diablo Cody's screenplay has some clever moments (including many tart lines for Julie), but is not without its frustrations. At one point Ricki says, "I was never a traditional mom," (we would never have guessed!) and the detail of her Republicanism seems an indicator of quirkiness more than actual ideology. Julie's two brothers feel like bland footnotes to the more interesting relationship between mother and daughter. Those who've accused Cody of overly cutesy language in the past will be unlikely to change their minds while watching this. The elements that do land are the ones that most bespeak a lived-in cosiness. In one scene, Ricki finds pot in Pete's freezer and smokes it with him and Julie. Destigmatised scenes of families smoking pot are rare, and their fumbling gestures feel natural rather than caricatured – between this film and 2009's *It's Complicated*, Streep wins the award for representations of sixty-something women getting high.

In another well-observed moment, Ricki and her bandmate/sometime-boyfriend Greg (Rick Springfield) take off each other's glasses while in bed before kissing, a moment more telling than any of their sitcom-broad onstage banter. At the end of the day, Ricki is probably baby boomer bait, and Demme doesn't quite emulate the colourful energy of say, 1986's *Something Wild*, but if the film was a slightly cheesy song on a classic rock radio station, we might bob our heads instead of turning it off. **ABBEY BENDER**





# Life

Directed by

**ANTON CORBIJN**

Starring

**ROBERT PATTINSON**

**DANE DEHAAN**

**JOEL EDGERTON**

Released

**25 SEPTEMBER**

3

## ANTICIPATION.

*Dare we hope for a good life?*

4

## ENJOYMENT.

*Life is clever and unusual.*

3

## IN RETROSPECT.

*Fun while it lasts.*

**L**ife is the story of two men pursuing their individual artistic callings against the grain of industry norms. Both Dennis Stock and James Dean died as glittering names in photojournalism and acting. But in 1955, when this film is set, neither was established.

“What do you see in him?” asks Dennis’ agent (Joel Edgerton). This drama takes place during the run-up to the premiere of *East of Eden*, the film that would make Dean a major-league movie star. Warner Brothers are hemming over casting him in *Rebel Without a Cause*, fearing that his quirks and honesty make him unsuitable for the studio’s star template treatment.

“It’s an awkwardness, it’s something pure,” is what Dennis (Robert Pattinson) sees in Jimmy (Dane DeHaan). He is dying to get away from the red-carpet beat. In Dean, is the potential material for promotion to his desired field of serious, cultural photography. So begins the slippery business of pinning down the evasive but disarming boy from Marion, Indiana. Languid, conga-playing farmboy Jimmy, wants a friend, not a photographer. He’ll invite Dennis out for jazz and Benzedrine, dismissing the matter of professional engagements.

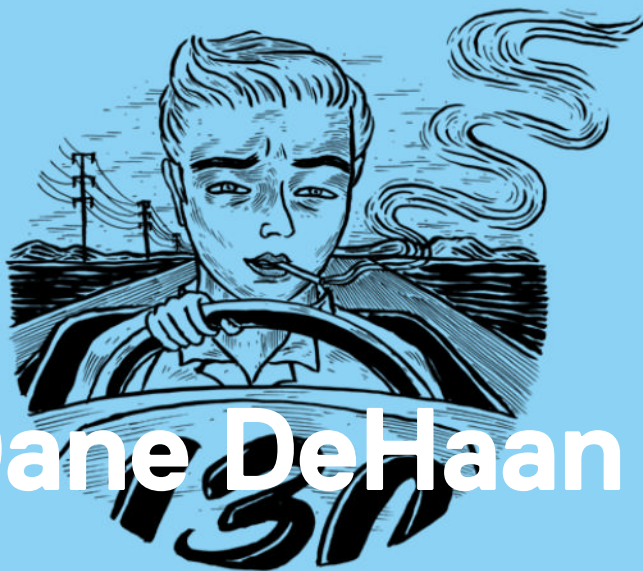
Corbijn uses their motivations – as well as their clashes – to convey the dance that takes place in media-talent relationships. Sometimes the film jitterbugs into exploitation, at others it waltzes into harmony. Dennis has a growing impatience to go with his approaching deadline. Jimmy is annoying, intentionally *and* unintentionally. DeHaan ratchets up Dean’s rhythmic speech,

evoking a self-conscious performance-poet tasked with a Ginsberg reading. His cherubic face is worlds away from the big handsome mug of history. Studied mannerisms morph beautifully into sincerity but the affectations jar. Dennis is his opposite. He is curt and minimal, essaying a very controlled, clock-watching professional. Pattinson’s performance is as crisp as the white shirt and black suits his character always wears, camouflage for problems that add depth to the film as they settle into shape.

In his 2007 debut, *Control*, Corbijn plumbed his roots as a photographer to create a decadent monochrome. In *Life*, composed frames show a tactile recreation of ’50s America. Vintage motors, hand-painted shop signs and theatres proudly announcing ‘CINEMASCOPE’ are evocative but not ostentatiously so. The air carries a seasonal coldness that lends images a frosty elegance. Many scenes feature men barking into old ebony phone receivers.

The social backdrop is just as carefully wrought. In another film, Ben Kingsley’s fuming studio head, Jack Warner, would be The Other Man to Jimmy Dean and the tussle would be of maverick versus the studio, *Saving Mr Banks* flavour. Instead, Kingsley ball-busts just enough to give Jimmy’s non-conformity gravitas, but the viewfinder is trained on the man behind the camera, Dennis Stock. As *Life* proceeds, Pattinson steps up, allowing more of his character’s insides to come out. The pace picks up and by the third act it’s a compelling dramatisation of an artistically and morally fascinating alliance. **SOPHIE MONKS KAUFMAN**





# Dane DeHaan

## The *Life* star talks fame, creative freedom and being big on Twitter.

**Y**ou can tell a lot about a celebrity from how they engage with social media. Some use it to boost their profile, others endorse brands or support worthy causes. Then there are people like Dane DeHaan, who prefer to treat it as a genuine extension of their personality, perhaps in the form of an as yet unanswered marriage proposal to @realDonaldTrump or sharing a photo of a particularly interesting snail. There's a serious side to the 29-year-old actor, of course, as evident in *Chronicle*, *Lawless*, *Kill Your Darlings* and now *Life*, director Anton Corbijn's behind-the-lens look at James Dean. *LWLies* spoke to DeHaan about playing Hollywood's most enduring icon and why he's happy doing things his own way.

**LWLIES: YOU'RE FAIRLY ACTIVE ON INSTAGRAM AND TWITTER. HOW DO YOU THINK JAMES DEAN'S LEGACY MIGHT HAVE BEEN AFFECTED IF SOCIAL MEDIA WAS AROUND IN HIS DAY?**

**DeHaan:** I really like social media because I get to use it on my own terms. I get to put up there what I want to put up there. It's a good opportunity for me to let people in on the kind of person

I really am. Compare that to when James Dean was around, his Instagram would have had to been completely controlled by the studio because it was a time when actors were kind of drafted by studios, so their image was not within their control. James Dean started working for a studio and he was cast as the cool, rebellious guy – he didn't have any control over that. That's the image people still have of him today. In a lot of ways, actors have a lot more control over their careers and their public image today.

**DO YOU THINK IT'S POSSIBLE FOR AN ACTOR TO BECOME A JAMES DEAN LEVEL ICON TODAY?**

I don't know, I guess the equivalent now is having your own blockbuster franchise or whatever.

**ASIDE FROM THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN 2, IS THERE A REASON YOU'VE AVOIDED THAT ROUTE?** Not really. I just think I would love for my career to be a slow burn. I have no desire to blow up and then fizzle out.

**IT SEEMS THE HIGHER AN ACTOR'S SOCIAL PROFILE, THE GREATER THE RISK. AS SOMEONE IN THE PUBLIC EYE DO YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'RE ONLY EVER ONE ILL-JUDGED TWEET AWAY FROM CAREER SUICIDE?** I mean I think about what I tweet and the photos I post, and I understand that what I do gives me a voice and people listen. Sometimes I try to do things for the greater good and others I just mess around and have fun. I don't think I've ever tweeted anything that could potentially ruin my career. I hope not, anyway. But I don't really feel the need to constantly update everyone, I just do it when I feel like I have something to say.

**YOU'VE GOT A COUPLE OF FILMS COMING UP WITH CARA DELEVINGNE, WHO SEEMS TO DO PRETTY WELL ON SOCIAL MEDIA.** Yeah, I haven't spent much time with her yet but I'll definitely be looking to get some pointers off her.

**WE IMAGINE STUDIO EXECS TALK ABOUT STUFF LIKE SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS A LOT.** Fortunately that's not really my side of the business, but I'm sure it happens a lot more often than people might think. I would hate to think how many casting sessions have come down to the number of Twitter followers someone has.

**HOW WOULD YOU REACT IF A STUDIO EXEC TOLD YOU TO GET MORE SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS?**

That's the great conundrum of our business. That's what James Dean struggled with – he was an artist who wanted to work with the best in the industry to become the best in the industry, but at that time you were completely owned by the studio and sadly he never got that opportunity. In a way the system still works like that, it's just a little different. I still consider myself an artist, I do this because I love acting, I love the work, but movies are big business and you have to acknowledge that. It will always be frustrating being an artist, trying to exist in a corporate world. Which is why I try and balance things between bigger studio movies and smaller independent movies. You know, movies like *Life*, where I'm gonna be given more freedom to learn and express myself. But I really don't know what I would do if someone told me I needed more Twitter followers. I don't even know what one does to get more. I'm just happy doing my thing 🍷





## Mississippi Grind

Directed by **ANNA BODEN, RYAN FLECK**  
 Starring **BEN MENDELSON, RYAN REYNOLDS,**  
**SIENNA MILLER**  
 Released **23 OCTOBER**

All things considered, there are times when we should all just fess up and agree that Robert Altman's 1974 gambling picaresque, *California Split*, is the greatest movie ever made. Aside from its unhealthy charm quotient, there's an alchemy to it that defies comprehension. The fact that it works without ever revealing how is a vital constituent of its beauty. Anna Boden and Ryan Fleck (of *Half Nelson* fame) attempt to reverse-engineer this secret formula for their latest feature, *Mississippi Grind*, a near remake of the Altman classic which doesn't quite carry the transcendent cosmic weight of its forebear. The film earns major points for giving Ben Mendelsohn a proper, meaty character to tussle with, no longer psychotic second banana or madballs *deus ex machina*. In its opening act, we even see Mendelsohn's character, Gerry, smiling, laughing and relaxing, which is less unnerving that you might imagine. It's a magnificent rainbow which briefly arcs across the Iowa skyline that brings Gerry together with Ryan Reynolds' Curtis, a charismatic nomad whose mere presence helps the pair to win big at poker.

With Curtis now confirmed as a walking, (fast)talking lucky charm, the pair escape their worldly woes by heading on down the Mississippi in search of a high-stakes game and a ticket to freedom. Boden and Fleck counterpoint the excitement felt by these wannabe high-rollers with a depiction of the American south which is low on romanticism and high on decrepit urban decay. The decision to make the film about more than just two guys trying their luck hampers proceedings, as you're always waiting for the big, important statement to drop. Sienna Miller and Analeigh Tipton crop up as two women economically forced into prostitution, and the film as a whole is about the ways people find to subsist when they don't have jobs to go to. A magical scene involving a rickety piano and some Erik Satie improv is the film's bittersweet highlight. **DAVID JENKINS**

**ANTICIPATION.** *Fleck and Boden dropped the ball with their 2010 film, It's Kind of a Funny Story.*

3

**ENJOYMENT.** *The first 30 minutes would probably earn a straight 5, though.*

3

**IN RETROSPECT.** *A desperate search for meaning in the second half displaces the fun.*

3



## Listen to Me Marlon

Directed by **STEVAN RILEY**  
 Released **23 OCTOBER**

In his 2005 memoir, 'Marlon Brando: The Naked Actor', George Englund recounts his relationship with the eponymous acting titan in great detail while offering little in the way of genuine insight – this despite he and "Mar" having apparently remained close from 1954 to the latter's death in 2004. It's not so much a failing on Englund's part, more a reflection on the complex nature of this famously private iconoclast. Reading it, you get the sense that not even Brando's best friend really knew him. Watching *Listen to Me Marlon*, you begin to understand why. At the beginning of Stevan Riley's film, we're greeted by Brando's digitised floating head. It's a slightly haunting, hypnotic start to an unorthodox biography comprised of previously unreleased audio material in which Brando attempts to unwrap his own enigma via self-hypnosis therapy sessions. Riley was granted access to hundreds of hours of recordings, allowing him to eschew talking heads in favour of intimate self-examination, so it's disappointing that the director reverts to a more conventional archive footage format for the remainder of his documentary.

Riley also misses a trick by not providing any context as to how and when each confessional was recorded, instead preferring to chapter his film according to the more obvious career milestones and notable personal conflicts and tragedies. We're reassured that Brando was one of the greats – that much is undeniable – and reliably informed that he was prone to displaying the kind of manipulative, narcissistic and paranoid behaviour that fuelled his notoriety within Hollywood and tarnished his public image. He was a dreamer, a womaniser, a principled political activist, a lousy father. A reluctant superstar who broke the mould and then lost the plot. Another common view upheld here is that Brando was a troubled soul who suffered for his art. That may be true, but this subjective, sentimental portrait does a disservice to all those who suffered for him. **ADAM WOODWARD**

**ANTICIPATION.** *Brando in his own words. Big.*

4

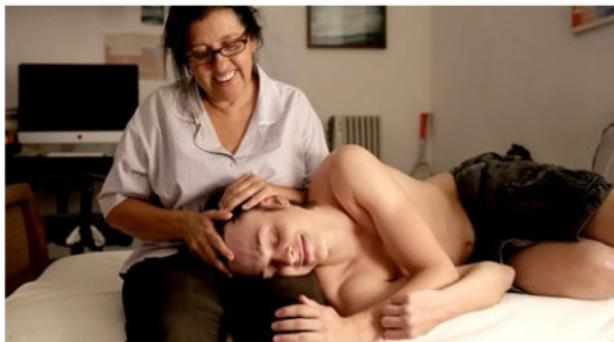
**ENJOYMENT.** *Doesn't quite live up to the promise of its fever dream opening salvo.*

3

**IN RETROSPECT.** *Like the man himself, compelling and confounding in equal measure.*

3





## The Second Mother

Directed by **ANNA MUYLAERT**  
 Starring **REGINA CASÉ, CAMILA MÁRDILA,**  
**LOURENÇO MUTARELLI**  
 Released **4 SEPTEMBER**

**A**nna Muylaert takes a clever and considered approach to social class in this sharply observed comedy of manners. Val (Regina Casé) has been the housekeeper for a wealthy family in Sao Paulo for as long as her teenage daughter Jessica (Camila Márdila) has been alive, but her decision to work in the city as a means of support has been a barrier towards their developing relationship. When Jessica organises a stay at the home of Val's employers, she questions the way in which the family treat both her and her mother.

Muylaert traces the passive aggressive lines of oppression between the two clans with wincing conviction. On meeting Jessica, wealthy matriarch Barbara inwardly scoffs at her ambition to become an architect. The film also touches upon elitist, chauvinistic behaviour through husband Carlos (Lourenço Mutarelli) who, rather than respect Jessica decides he would like to own her. Muylaert cuts through hypocritical bullshit with stinging honesty but manages to keep the warmth of humanity alive through the central relationship. Val attempts to reconcile relations in the house, but a dormant rebellious spirit begins to emerge. Her arc delivers a small victory that ends with a spine-tingling splash of mischief. Casé's endearing screen presence makes the back and forth with her daughter both compelling and moving, and it warms the heart to observe their fragile bond strengthening. Val's altruistic streak is both her downfall and saviour, but she never alters her personality, she just possesses the capacity to take on new things and roll with the punches. The unspoken divide between classes is clearly defined by Muylaert who moves her characters between claustrophobic dwellings and grandly designed buildings. *The Second Mother* strikes a passionate moral chord that also connects with conversations about the importance of achieving social change through cross-generational education.

KATHERINE MCLAUGHLIN

### ANTICIPATION.

Won awards at Sundance and Berlin.

4

### ENJOYMENT.

Regina Casé is a marvel.

4

**IN RETROSPECT.** Anna Muylaert is a smart and passionate filmmaker.

4



## How to Change the World

Directed by **JERRY ROTHWELL**  
 Released **9 SEPTEMBER**

**P**reserving dreams of liberal idealism is a hard enough task at the best of times, but when that dream has to exist within a bureaucratic framework... well, good luck with that. Bob Hunter knows the score, a Canadian local newspaper columnist who went on to found Greenpeace and may possibly have coined our modern conception of environmental activism. The various marine-based protests he instigated in the early '70s – from taking umbrage with Nixon testing subterranean nuclear payloads off the coast of Alaska to snatching footage of gore-caked Russian whaling vessels – were pure examples of a singularity of cause. The tie-dyed, pot-addled jolly boys who were involved in these missions, many of whom crop up as talking heads in Jerry Rothwell's functional documentary, seemed wedded to a strategy of risking personal safety in order to bring these horror stories to a wider public through the media.

But when the task of creating a system which will allow everyone to risk life and limb in the name of saving the planet arises, that's when things fall apart. Though Rothwell does allow for criticism of Hunter's methods, the film remains sympathetic to his righteous cause. It's an episodic canter through Hunter's various sorties, often happy to just focus on the eccentric details and juxtapose the activists with the Laurel Canyon counter-culture types through its bland musical selections. Formally, the film feels Alex Gibney-lite, its use of slick graphics, tricky transitions and plush studio sets for the interviews somewhat undermines the militant grassroots ideals of the people telling the story. Though the film demonstrates that even charities need rigid business models in order to survive (which, essentially, is the "How" of the title), it neglects to peruse deeper on the effectiveness of Greenpeace's activities and whether it has actually succeeded at all in changing the world. **DAVID JENKINS**

### ANTICIPATION.

The story of Greenpeace is a story that needs to be told.

3

### ENJOYMENT.

It's fun and eventful, if hardly revelatory.

3

### IN RETROSPECT.

The definition of a 'once is more than enough' movie.

3





# Irrational Man

Directed by  
**WOODY ALLEN**  
Starring  
**JOAQUIN PHOENIX**  
**EMMA STONE**  
**PARKER POSEY**  
Released  
**11 SEPTEMBER**

3

## ANTICIPATION.

*Allen remains as reliable as migrating geese in delivering his annual missive.*

3

## ENJOYMENT.

*No great shakes, but a more tricky and philosophically rich drama than expected.*

3

## IN RETROSPECT.

*Falls somewhere into the nebulous void between major and minor Woody.*

A dark comedy of the conscience, *Irrational Man* is effectively Woody Allen's *How Stella Got Her Groove Back*, though – for alcoholic and recently impotent philosophy professor Abe Lucas (Joaquin Phoenix) – the process of groove recovery isn't quite so innocent as flying to Jamaica for a fling with a local hunk named Winston Shakespeare. For Abe, whose potbelly alone is heftier than several of Allen's recent films, reinvigorating his life might require ending someone else's. For some time now, it's been a self-evident truth that Woody Allen movies have come to exist only in relationship to one another, as the characters with which he populates them exist only in relation to himself. This isn't a new phenomenon, and no one familiar with the inertia of the iconoclast's working life would ever expect his forty-sixth feature to change that. It doesn't. In its best moments, *Irrational Man* has the uncharacteristic temerity to question itself, or at least the chutzpah to convince you that it might.

There's something very wrong with Abe, with Phoenix inhabiting the role like the lovechild Doc Sportello and Whit Stillman probably never even tried to have. Hired to teach a summer course at a prominent Rhode Island university, he rolls onto campus in the throes of an existential crisis, a flaskful of scotch in his jacket and a voiceover paraphrasing Kant in his head ("Man is confronted with questions he cannot answer or dismiss...").

He stands up like he's falling over, and the first thing that almost every person says to him is, "Are you okay?" He is not okay. Worse, he's impotent.

Jill Pollard (Emma Stone, ebullient as ever), the tall girl with the big eyes in the second row, is determined to remind Abe that life is worth thinking about and taking seriously.

For a time, it seems like *Irrational Man* is playing into the hands of Allen's most reflexive detractors, and that Jill's youthful pizzazz will stiffen Abe right back into shape. Living in constant fear of her own ordinariness, Jill can't help but be attracted to Abe's sense of residual worldliness. When Abe glumly confesses to her that he'd be too far gone to appreciate a new woman in his life, Jill perceives it as a personal challenge.

That's when things take a turn. While at a diner one afternoon, Abe and Jill overhear a woman crying to her friends about the crooked judge who's going to deprive her of custody to her kids. For Jill, it's one hell of a sob story. For Abe, it's his *Strangers on a Train* eureka moment. Suddenly, his life has renewed purpose: he's going to kill that judge, and he's going to feel great about it. As the summer winds on, all Jill can think about is Abe, and all Abe can think about is murder.

*Irrational Man* can be seen as one of Allen's cleverest films, and it's certainly among his most focused, but even the satisfying tidiness of its ending contributes to the sense that we're watching a simulation rather than a story. Still, there's an impish pleasure in seeing what Jill has learned by the end of the semester, and in how she's learned it. The film's cold, lingering irony is that Abe Lucas might just be the best teacher she'll ever have. **DAVID EHRLICH**





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# Everest

Directed by

**BALTASAR KORMÁKUR**

Starring

**JASON CLARKE**

**KEIRA KNIGHTLEY**

**JAKE GYLLENHAAL**

Released

**18 SEPTEMBER**

2

## ANTICIPATION.

*Baltasar Kormákur's recent hack-for-hire work (Two Guns, Contaband) dulls the excitement somewhat.*

4

## ENJOYMENT.

*A remarkable mountaineering melodrama rather than a standard-issue disaster movie.*

3

## IN RETROSPECT.

*Pardon our French, but this could easily turn out to be an Oscar dark horse.*

It's time we expunged all this hooey about the purported Jake Gyllenhaal renaissance from our minds. We refer to the recent phase of his acting career where he stars in films in which he appears to be straining way too hard for effect (cf *Enemy*, *Prisoners*, *Nightcrawler*, *Southpaw*). Baltasar Kormákur's *Everest* is an ace, merrily archaic disaster movie that Gyllenhaal, in a weirdly bearded lovable rogue supporting role, appears to be treating as "one for them". He's more laid back than usual, unselfconscious, with no sign of deep method character immersion, or that he's trying to subtly articulate everything he's feeling for the camera. And it's his best work in a long time – the empathy for his character shines through effortlessly. Though this film deals quite literally in the highest of high drama it's an agreeably mellow exploration of when human life becomes the stake for wild physical endeavour.

Jason Clarke, an actor whose rabbit/headlights turns in juggernaut blockbuster franchises such as *Terminator Genysis* and *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes*, comes into his own when asked to play a chipper dullard. In this case, it's commercial mountaineering guide Rob Hall, and the film, based on Jon Krakauer's reportage bestseller, *'Into Thin Air'*, offers a retelling of the unfortunate events which occurred in May of '96. Without going into too much detail, it's a simple case of a certain amount of people going up the mountain, and a diminished number being able to make their way down. The film exposes a certain futility when it comes to working in the extreme sports arena, suggesting that guides, trainers and

experts are perhaps a little too casual with the potential dangers of their chosen occupation. They celebrate life's potential by nervously chest-bumping death right out of the frame.

There is, at times, the faint bouquet of cheese, especially when over-eager side players intone their earnest reasons for wanting to conquer the world's highest summit and, often, concurrently signposting their own dim future. Yet Kormákur's film – certainly one of his best – does not play into the hands of drab convention, offering a detailed, near 80-minute build up to the eventual fireworks, which pays huge dividends when you're actually asked to worry about the fate of these characters.

Where *Everest* works best is in its simple decision to settle its focus on the people rather than the dispassionate forces of nature. There is also no human antagonist. The mountain is the cackling bad guy here. What we have are just ordinary people coerced into making life or death decisions in impossible circumstances, the dire consequences of which are entirely unknown. This is also a film about the '90s, about the rise of dude culture and the commercialisation of (male-dominated) extreme sports as suitable for stocky businessmen on the cusp of mid-life crisis (Josh Brolin), plucky postmen who have wasted their life in the service industry (John Hawkes) or gung-ho journalists looking for their next rad longread (Michael Kelly). Yet it's the maternally-minded female characters – from Keira Knightley's housebound wife to Emily Watson and Elizabeth Debicki's basecamp liaisons – who lend this tragedy its humane and heartbreaking edge. **DAVID JENKINS**





## Preview: *Go Get a Fireman*

For almost half a century it's been among the world's most beloved pictures, whether in surveys of critics or of the ordinary, everyday folk for whom, let's not forget, the magic of the silver screen was first called into being. Like many of its admirers, I first came to *The Towering Inferno* as a child. Back then I was more struck by the film's spectacle than by its nuanced evocation of tall-tower life and fierce-yet-gentle lessons in morality. Returning to the movie older and more experienced, I found, like so many others, inspiration in the character of Fire Chief Michael O'Hallorhan, whose quiet dignity and refusal to give in to mob rule are at the heart of the picture. Memorably played by Steve McQueen, he is one of cinema's most admired and inspiring characters; all over the world, there are senior fire-service operatives who say they entered the world of conflagration control because of Michael O'Hallorhan and his wise-cracking emergency servicing.

All of which made it an unnerving experience to find myself among the select band of cineastes given a copy of the screenplay to *Go Get a Fireman*, a newly discovered sequel to the film that taught us all so much about life and how to live it. Unnerving and surprising: ever since *Inferno* lit up the screen in 1974, it was thought this was the only script

the late Arthur Cumstein had ever written; it was pure luck that the writer's lawyer, Tony French, discovered a complete unpublished manuscript of the follow-up in his own papers while assembling his defence against a major financial misconduct charge.

Set some 30 years after the events of *Inferno*, the story revisits the same characters held in such affection by fans: O'Hallorhan, of course, but also the doomed building's architect, Doug Roberts, misunderstood playboy outcast Roger Simmons and roulette-table tomboy Susan Franklin. I'll be giving little away if I let slip that black security guard Jernigan – memorably essayed by OJ Simpson in *Inferno* – cashes in his chips in Act One again. But we should remember, this work was penned in the era of Hollywood's Tibbs Code, which stipulated that Sidney Poitiers were the only non-white characters permitted to survive to the end of a film; if he were unavailable, producers would have to either change the script or hire Yul Brynner.

But there are other revelations afoot in *Go Get a Fireman*, those whose lives were so touched by *Inferno* may be less comfortable with, and the biggest is in the portrayal of O'Hallorhan. In the first picture he is uncomplicated, seen through a child-like lens as we meet him sitting on his porch, pipe in hand and preparing to put on his white firesuit and battle yet another blaze. The driving ethic of the film is expressed through him, in a speech so famous it's memorised by school children in some US states. "We were lucky tonight," he tells Roberts in a hot, tense denouement. "Body count's less than 200. One day you're gonna kill 10,000 in one of these firetraps; and I'm gonna keep eating smoke and bringing

out bodies until somebody asks us how to build them." It was a bold statement to commit to film during the skyscraper age and one which became a call to arms for vernacular architects. And yet, in *Go Get a Fireman*, an older O'Hallorhan is all, "Yeah, tall buildings are awesome. The bigger the better, in my opinion." The now-retired Fire Chief, it turns out, has become an apologist for the very kind of despotic monolithism that he once challenged so eloquently.

'How can this be?' many fans of *Inferno* will ask. Inevitably O'Hallorhan's reputation will be revised because of the new screenplay, due to go into production courtesy of Michael Bay in 2016. Already, several commentators have noted a foreshadowing of the Chief's change of heart in the original film, suggesting that a deeper textual reading shows he really liked very big towers all along. Many fans will be forced to look again at a work to which they have been deeply devoted. But they should not be too hard on themselves for believing a fictional character can 'change his mind' between one set of pages and the next, even though he has no thoughts or intentions or desires or prejudices because he has no existence outside of a screenplay written to be made into a movie. Back in the 1970s, you could walk into any producer's office and say, "I have a script based around an ethically illuminating protagonist peddling some pretty uncontroversial common-sense stuff who will serve as an ideal philosophical bedrock for people too lazy and/or stupid to read actual philosophy," and walk out with a fat contract and contact deeds for the best miniature-work pyromaniac in LA. Today, that character would turn out to be a nonce before you could roll camera 🎬





# Legend

*Directed by*  
**BRIAN HELGELAND**  
*Starring*  
**TOM HARDY**  
**TOM HARDY**  
**EMILY BROWNING**  
*Released*  
**9 SEPTEMBER**

3

## ANTICIPATION.

*Can't be worse than the 1990 Kemp bros vehicle. Can it?*

2

## ENJOYMENT.

*It is.*

2

## IN RETROSPECT.

*Might as well be prefixed with the words 'Print the'.*

**T**here's no real evidence to suggest that Reggie Kray had a fancy for lemon sherbets. And yet writer/director Brian Helgeland has Tom Hardy routinely sucking on the sweets during early meet-cutes with Emily Browning's Frances Shea, the wholesome 16-year-old club owner's daughter who endured a tumultuous marriage to Reg. It's the kind of clunky visual metaphor – he's a tough bloke with a soft centre, you see – masquerading as a genuine character trait that reveals far more about Helgeland's screenwriting ability (or lack thereof) than his chosen subject.

Come to think of it, that's quite a handy metaphor after all. Because break its hard, shiny exterior and you'll find that *Legend* quickly dissolves into a fine powdery mess, leaving nothing more than a bitter aftertaste and a few brittle shards – fragmented hopes of the film that might have been. This is the story of the infamous identical twins who ruled London's East End during the '50s and '60s, as told in the most facile manner imaginable. It's the kind of loosely sketched, superficial portrait you suspect the Krays themselves would have a great time with (god rest their filthy cockney souls). That's not to accuse Helgeland of casting the brothers in an especially favourable light, more that he glamorises their corrupt lifestyle to the extent that his film often feels like a jaunty lament for Britain's gangland golden age, when a couple of double hard Hoxton hellraisers could scheme and intimidate their way to the top, becoming working-class heroes in the process.

The underlying message here is that a gangster's life is no paradise, though what this essentially

boils down to is the brothers giving spoil sport rozzers the slip and taking the occasional baseball bat to the ribs during pre-orchestrated scuffles down their local boozer. Violence came second nature to the Krays, and in that sense perhaps it should come as no surprise that we've ended up with such a nasty unpacking of their mythology. The real problem here is not so much the gratuitous yet by-all-accounts authentic manner with which Helgeland and DoP Dick Poop (née Pope) depict the Krays at their most dangerously schizophrenic, more the complete lack of insight provided into what made them this way. Ronnie, for example, lived out his remaining years in Broadmoor psychiatric hospital, yet Helgeland isn't really interested in getting into the nitty gritty stuff, so Ronnie is simply depicted as a one-dimensional psychopath with a penchant for pretty boys.

To that end, the way *Legend* breaches the subject of Ronnie's sexuality is at least partly commendable. In an early scene, a brash American business associate invites the Krays to Philadelphia with the promise of setting Ronnie up with a "nice girl". "I prefer boys," is his no-nonsense rebuff. It's hardly a major revelation (Ronnie was openly bisexual), but the timing of this exchange coupled with Hardy's matter-of-fact delivery makes it a surprising moment in an otherwise predictable biopic.

There's also something to be said for the expert technical trickery that enables Hardy to turn in two outstanding lead performances for the price of one. Get over the novelty of seeing Tom Hardy headbutt himself, however, and you'll find there isn't much of a film here. **ADAM WOODWARD**





# A Girl at My Door

Directed by

**JULY JUNG**

Starring

**DOONA BAE**

**SAE-RON KIM**

**SAE-BYEOK SONG**

Released

**18 SEPTEMBER**

3

## ANTICIPATION.

*A hat-trick of Cannes 2014 nominations makes this an exciting prospect.*

4

## ENJOYMENT.

*Undeniably discomfiting but brave, considered and rewarding.*

4

## IN RETROSPECT.

*A detective story with a satisfying social justice twist.*

Rural South Korea is the setting for July Jung's courageous and quietly confrontational debut feature which boasts a pair of astonishingly nuanced performances. The film concerns itself with the rot that eats away at humanity both on a personal and societal level, with its depiction of a small, struggling community debased by corruption, prejudice and the moral contamination of an abused and neglected child. Eschewing sensationalism for a rigorously restrained approach to issues which become increasingly combustible, *A Girl at My Door* undulates between hope and despair.

An initially unspecified scandal sees talented young police officer Young-nam (the mesmeric Doona Bae) packed off to a fishing village where she's installed as their new station chief. Although she's viewing events through a fog of functioning alcoholism, her new charges are an undesirable bunch whose own failings are glaringly apparent. Many are equally sozzled, they're just less adept at hiding it. As she drives into town, Young-nam spies shy, scraggly child Do-hee (Sae-ron Kim, in a performance of considerable complexity and maturity), crouching at the roadside, almost as if she's anxiously awaiting her arrival.

Resplendent in her professionalism and sporting a sleek bob, Young-nam cuts a contrastingly dignified figure to those around her and gets to work standing up to disorderly men, not least Yong-ha (Sae-byeok Song), the swinish stepfather of the aforementioned 14-year-old wretch. He's a low-level thug who has, nevertheless, capitalised on

the area's ageing population – exploiting desperate foreign workers and the lack of local competition – to become the town's undeserving, unchecked top dog. His stepdaughter's situation is a truly sorry one: for years she's been relentlessly and openly brutalised by Yong-ha and his elderly, comparably chaotic mother, as well as her peers (her mother has flown this most unappealing of coops).

Riffing delicately on the traditional small-town corruption detective story, Jung uses the framework to show females controversially taking on the crooked, patriarchal status quo, and to explore issues around child protection. She has also crafted a morality tale that addresses the fear that doing the right thing in a sensitive situation might trigger unwanted scrutiny, violence or personal persecution. Young-nam acts as the village's unasked-for wake-up call, sticking her nose where it isn't welcome. Consequently, her worst nightmare plays out. She experiences not only misogyny and suspicion, but has her sexuality exposed and cruelly brandished before her like a shameful, distasteful weapon, in a country where being gay remains taboo.

Although *A Girl at My Door* far from shouts about its achievements, these speak for themselves: for instance, its willingness to acknowledge the end result of abuse is rare in that a young victim might ultimately become capable of violence themselves, while it posits that a battered child can manipulate the system and still be effectively innocent. And that this small but powerful film retains its gentleness and compassion in the face of the bleakest of subjects makes it all the more remarkable. **EMMA SIMMONDS**





# Taxi

Directed by  
**JAFAR PANAHI**  
Starring  
**JAFAR PANAHI**  
Released  
**30 OCTOBER**

5

## ANTICIPATION.

*Jafar Panahi's latest (and a Golden Bear winner to boot).*

5

## ENJOYMENT.

*A sly, subversive stand in favour of empathy.*

5

## IN RETROSPECT.

*That smile...*

Jafar Panahi's recent protest triptych – *This Is Not a Film*, *Closed Curtain*, *Taxi* – could be construed as criminal acts in the eyes of the Iranian government. Tethered to a lifetime filmmaking ban and extended house arrest, Panahi has nevertheless endured by creating innovative works that stand up to oppression through tenacious resolve. If the director is indeed an enemy of the state, the international film community has been his willing and vocal accomplice.

Solidarity is a strong theme in *Taxi*, Panahi's most playful and hopeful film in years. A seamless and subversive meshing of documentary and fiction, it finds Panahi driving around Tehran posing as an everyday cabbie, interacting with customers (or are they actors?) in a variety of conversations. These discussions range in tone from trivial to serious, each hinging on a character's ability (or lack thereof) to empathise with another. The battle for artistic and political freedom underlines them all.

Firmly rooted in the driver's seat, Panahi nevertheless positions himself as the captain of a vessel controlled by the whims of others. There is no end destination, only the movement between places that are supposed to be off limits for the camera. He listens to an array of passengers gripe about the government, watches an injured man get loaded into the backseat, speaks about state-controlled censorship with his niece Hannah, and humours an adoring DVD pirate who recognises the auteur immediately.

Despite taking place actively in the outside world, *Taxi* still retains a feeling of entrapment.

Permanently fixed on the dashboard, the image feels locked in, just as much a prisoner as the filmmaker who can only experience the outside world posing as someone else. The camera still moves (Panahi manually conducts a few shot-reverse shots), but passengers often mistake it for something else (one man refers it to as an anti-theft device).

*This is Not a Film* and *Closed Curtain* highlight the enraged pulse of political cinema living and breathing in confined private spaces. *Taxi* advances Panahi's aesthetic by exposing the contradictions of ideological and political rhetoric in the public arena. "You live in another world," yells a man arguing with a stranger sitting in the backseat. They bicker over the moral latitude of capital punishment, Panahi (and the audience) caught in the middle. When it's revealed that the man is himself a burglar, the entire conversation takes on an absurd quality.

*Taxi* has a grand sense of humour. It rather lovingly suggests that crime and punishment are relative terms; one man's serious offence is another woman's slap on the wrist. What's clear, though, is that the cinema can help clarify these gradations when examined by artists that still see hope in human nature and art itself. Look no further than the quote spoken by Panahi's civil rights attorney late in the film: "Here is a rose for the people of cinema, because the people of cinema can be relied on." That flower rests on the dashboard during the final long take, in full view until two thieves literally steal the image away from us. It would be easy to get enraged by the interruption, but like Panahi does so often in *Taxi*, it's hard not to smile. **GLENN HEATH JR**





# Just Jim

*Directed by*  
**CRAIG ROBERTS**  
*Starring*  
**EMILE HIRSCH**  
**CRAIG ROBERTS**  
**CHARLOTTE RANDALL**

*Released*  
**25 SEPTEMBER**

3

**ANTICIPATION.**  
*It's that kid who's in all those films!*

3

**ENJOYMENT.**  
*All over the shop, but much about it is bold and lovable.*

3

**IN RETROSPECT.**  
*We've not seen the end of this Roberts character (in a good way).*

**B**eware of false idols – the unequivocal message behind the directorial debut by eye-wateringly young Welsh actor, Craig Roberts. Introduced to the world as a duffel coat-wearing nebbish in Richard Ayoade's cutesy-pie rom-com, *Submarine*, from 2010, Roberts has chosen to pay homage to his erstwhile collaborator while also adding something new and macabre into the mix. In *Just Jim*, exteriors are alienatingly pallid, the Welsh landscape sitting quietly underneath a floating gauze of dewy mist. The interiors are meshed with shadowy bars, like there's been a town-wide power cut and no-one can be bothered to change the fuses.

Jim himself, as played by Roberts with the pedal down on his customary Keatonesque deadpan, is not liked by anyone in his immediate social circle. Even the psychotically consistent class bullies, displaced from some '50s American high school, have Jim as their plaything, their torment now evoking annoyance more than fear. His relationship with his similarly friendless parents is distant, his only solace coming from playing SNES on his own and fawning over pink-haired siren, Jackie (Charlotte Randall). A charming, foul-mouthed wiseguy named Dean (Emile Hirsch) rolls into town – possibly a figment of Jim's limited imagination – whose shady existence is dedicated to helping Jim earn cool points and then take ownership of this dead-end burg.

The film sets out its dinky stall as expected, an appealing provincial comedy in which the writer/director-star appears to take great glee in

making himself come across as a lovable asshat. The production design is scattered with ironic anachronisms, such as the amazing, Martin Parr-esque local shop sign ("Jill's") and an addictive 16-bit computer game which involves racing ferrets who die when they fall in the sea. The cold geometric flatness of the cinematography (c/o Richard Stoddard) emphasises the fact that nothing happens in this town, and that it's all down to Jim to switch things up.

With about half-an-hour on the clock, at the point where Roberts has suggested we're easing into a conventional finale where Jackie learns to love Jim for the dingus he is, not the dingus he wants to be, the film takes an unexpected tonal shift. Dean's escalating recourse to violence becomes ever more regular and Jim starts to believe that he's actually placing his parents in the way of physical harm. Proceedings take a turn for the *Blue Velvet*, with Hirsch going full Frank Booth at certain moments.

The difference, though, is that Roberts suggests that behind the idyllic façade of picket-fenced suburbia, it's not horror and depravity and violence – it's pure apathy. *Just Jim* is by no means the complete article, more a ragbag collection of impressive stand-alone sequences than a fully immersive and coherent story. Yet Roberts expends enough effort avoiding turgid Brit film clichés and not pandering to "audience expectation" (whatever the hell that is), to end up with a movie that you'd be hard pressed not to describe as sufficiently frisky. And that's more than okay with us. **DAVID JENKINS**







# with Craig Roberts

## LWLies heads on a field trip to South Wales to watch the magic of cinema unfurl.

“I love violence. I mean, I listen to Eminem every day.” Actor-turned-director Craig Roberts tells *LWLies* these alarming words. We are grabbing snatches of interviews in between takes on the shoot of his debut feature, *Just Jim*. Roberts is best known for playing 15-year-old Oliver Tate in Richard Ayoade’s whimsical 2010 feature, *Submarine*. Now aged 23, he still resembles a scared kid. The set is an immaculately tiny house with a sprawling garden in his hometown of Maesycwmmmer, a village with a population of 2,141 that is 15 miles north of Cardiff, Wales. Roberts has made a point of harnessing lived experience for his film, from writing a script directly inspired by his socially awkward teen years, to filming scenes in the classrooms and corridors of his old primary school. Indeed, bobbing about the set with a camera are two current Lewis School Pengam students – Rhys and Jack. They are filming a behind-the-scenes feature in preparation for the eventual home release.

It’s a very Welsh production with one exception: the Hollywood actor Emile Hirsch. Ratcheting up his fish-out-of-water appearance

is the fact that Dean, his character, is styled like a classic, all-American cool kid, right down to a name inspired by the original Rebel Without a Cause. With slicked-back hair and blue jeans, his presence on this very rainy Welsh set is a delightful curio, all the more so because he’s behaving every inch the nonchalant professional, as if all he ever does is hang about in small village productions.

“It is bizarre having Emile Hirsch here, which kind of works, because the movie is bizarre,” says Roberts. We ask how he is finding his stay in Maesycwmmmer. “I think he’s okay. He’s staying at a golf course kinda hotel thingy and he’s pretty good. I think he’s having a whale of a time. He’s not really doing much, but there’s not much to do.” We say that we’ve seen the pair nipping off to share a cigarette. Are they tight? “Are we tight? I don’t know. You’d have to ask him. I like him. He’s cool. We’re pretty tight. I didn’t know him before this. He’s a pretty nice guy though. He’s really cool to get along with. He’s a great actor. I was a big fan of his. I loved *Into the Wild*.”

David Gordon Green was the middle-man in this case, sending Roberts’ script to Hirsch, who liked it, and the rest is history. *LWLies* is perhaps excessively delighted to see the California-born movie star in this context. Yet the unsung heroes of the shoot are the old couple who own the house that is being used for the shoot, and the one next door, which the crew use for comfort breaks and refreshments. The latter, they live in, the former was unused until Roberts scouted it. We ask the lady, who has hospitably provided a glass of cranberry juice, if it’s exciting to have a movie star on her door step. She confesses that she has no idea who Emile Hirsch is. She’s asked her friends and they have no idea either. Equality reigns in Maesycwmmmer.

Roberts sounds the proudest when discussing how he turned the unused and apparently trashed house into Jim’s family home. It’s insides are tiny but I’m allowed to tuck myself in a corner as scene 76 is filmed in the living room. In it, Jim returns from his disastrous birthday party (nobody came), obliviously interrupting his parents’ candle-lit tête-a-tête. *LWLies* drinks in the vintage patterns that make the room seem like a ’70s time capsule.

“I wanted to create an otherworldly kind of scene, and a timeless kind of thing,” says Roberts. “It started with me coming with pictures and references from movies that I really liked: *The Conformist* by Bertolucci, *Ghost World* was probably an influence for the tone of it, and *Ferris Bueller...* John Hughes movies in general. I feel like we don’t do those kinds of movies any more. I think that’s probably because the innocence has been lost, like, if you do a movie about guys going to an art gallery and skipping school, people are not going to think that’s very cool any more. You have to do a *Project X* and burn a house down to impress people. It’s kind of sad.”

*Billy Liar* is another obvious reference. Roberts says he watched that film a lot before making *Just Jim*. But why is Jim’s fantasy life so coarse and violent? “Because light is boring. I don’t like sugar-coated stuff and I feel like a lot of stuff is. Wes Anderson stuff is very sugar-coated. They’re like kids’ movies.” This affinity for darkness is professed moments before Roberts politely invites a production assistant under his umbrella, as the rain intensifies. In the contrast between his unabashed enthusiasm for violence and his small, well-mannered exterior is the enigmatic appeal of Craig Roberts 🍄





## 3½ Minutes, Ten Bullets

Directed by  
**MARC SILVER**  
Released  
**2 OCTOBER**

4

### ANTICIPATION.

*The time is ripe for reflecting on why unarmed black men are being murdered across America...*

3

### ENJOYMENT.

*Access to the courtroom results in an objective indictment of the cold hard facts.*

3

### IN RETROSPECT.

*A report – not a reflection – that could've benefitted from more authored storytelling.*

Jordan Davis and three of his friends were sat in a parked car at a petrol station. As Davis' father states, "It wasn't a bad neighbourhood, he was five minutes from home, and it wasn't late at night – it was 7.45pm." The boys were listening to rap music, loudly – much to the chagrin of Michael Dunn, the white middle-aged man parked next to them. Dunn asked the boys to turn "that rap crap" down. Davis objected. Dunn pulled out a gun and fired 10 bullets at the car before driving off, killing Davis.

Dunn was tried and eventually convicted in a case that came to be known as 'The Loud Music Trial'. Director Marc Silver was granted access to the court chambers during the trial and – amazingly – was given permission to film all but the jury from the back of the room. Footage from the trial is interspersed with that of Dunn's initial police interrogation, as well as prison phone recordings between Dunn and his girlfriend Rhonda Rouer, and interviews with Davis' friends and family.

It's hard not to be moved by Davis' parents, choking back silent tears while they revisit home video footage of their son. His friends and girlfriend are similarly sympathetic figures; Silver captures the boys playing basketball in their leafy suburb, while the courtroom tape presents Davis' girlfriend as a heartbreaking picture of poise and restraint – pretty, polished and polite, all, "Yes, ma'am, no ma'am."

Silver does well to paint a picture of Davis' community, though less so of Davis himself. On one hand, it's important to challenge Dunn's

assumption that Davis was "a gangster rapper". Yet, there is a sense that Davis' middle-class status is being played upon, leaving us wondering – and worrying – if a less relatable 'character' would lend themselves to such smooth storytelling.

"On TV, they always talk about 'motive'. What's my fuckin' motive?," Dunn snorts, claiming he shot Davis in an act of self-defence, not murder. While the media maelstrom around the ever-contentious 'Stand Your Ground' law is touched on, the film resists the urge to dig too deeply into the ingrained prejudices that led Dunn to pull the trigger. Silver doesn't situate Davis' death into the wider cultural context, despite the trial unfolding around the same time as the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. Perhaps, in this sense, the opportunity to say something more potent and timely is missed.

Documentaries are living texts, commentaries angled towards some kernel of truth. Troublingly, there seems to be a tendency for films like this one to treat themselves as 'objective' documents to be filed away. Silver tells the story as he sees it, presenting the facts rather than investigating them, which, for better or worse, enables him to maintain a tone of calm composure throughout. Cleanly presented and crisply framed, each image is shot with a respectfully detached gaze, from the talking heads to the twisting Floridian highways shot at golden hour. Sadly, this means that Silver's treatment of the case feels overly forensic and ultimately too trusting that the facts will speak for themselves. **SIMRAN HANS**



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## Closed Curtain

Directed by **JAFAR PANAHİ**

Starring **KAMBUZIA PARTOVI, MARYAM MOQADAM, JAFAR PANAHİ**

Released **4 SEPTEMBER**

It's ironic that Iranian director Jafar Panahi went to the Caspian shoreline to make *Closed Curtain*. The status of the resource rich sea is still unresolved, due to disagreements over delimitation between Iran and the other four nations that share its coastline. And yet oil is drilled by all five countries. Panahi's status mirrors that of the Sea. He's been prohibited from making films by the Iranian government since 2010, but does so anyway. This is his second feature since 2011's *This Is Not a Film*. Until his situation is resolved, he looks inwards for material, but *Closed Curtain*, made in 2013, represents a definite end to the ideas he can generate in isolation from the world. A writer (Kambuzia Partovi, who co-directed the film) comes to a house on the seashore with his dog, who he hides in a bag. Dogs are all-but-prohibited as pets in Iran, and this small act of defiance means that he has to draw heavy curtains all around the house. His peace is disturbed by a couple that claim to be brother and sister, and that they are on the run from the authorities. The brother leaves, and the writer is left alone with the sister, who is implied to be suicidal. The two butt heads as the writer wonders if she is a spy or something more sinister.

This is where things get tricky, as the film veers from fiction into something more surreal. Panahi is saying that art cannot exist in a vacuum, and that it needs to be nourished through honest social and intellectual interaction. Everything in the second part becomes a critique on the deficiencies of the first part. We see what it is like to be kneecapped at your prime, and Panahi suggests that the only thing you can do is to examine the wound and maybe pick at it. "I know times are really tough, but it'll get better," says Panahi's friend. For his sake, and our benefit, we hope so too. **BEKZHAN SARSENBAI**

### ANTICIPATION.

One of Iran's foremost directors.

4

### ENJOYMENT.

Derails itself on purpose.

3

### IN RETROSPECT.

A powerful meditation on creativity.

4



## Cartel Land

Directed by **MATTHEW HEINEMAN**

Released **4 SEPTEMBER**

What good is courage without vision? It's a question that narrative filmmakers rarely bother to ask of their heroes, and documentary makers almost never think to ask of themselves. *Cartel Land*, which finds Matthew Heineman venturing into the dark heart of the world's most dangerous drug war and returning with little more than his life, is an unusually lucid self-portrait of someone who's in so far over his head that it's a shock he doesn't lose it. Even though Heineman never appears as a character in his film, at no point in *Cartel Land* do you get the sense that he's particularly safe behind the camera. The action begins in the dead of night, as the director shines a flashlight on a group of wearily armed men who refer to themselves as, "The number one meth cooks in Michoacán," the state considered to be the birthplace of Mexico's drug war and the setting for most of Heineman's film.

After explaining that they make the best ice because an American chemist and his son came and taught them (the movie's only genuinely eyebrow-raising moment), one of the cooks diagnoses the group as symptoms of institutionalised poverty. This doc essentially exists to vet that claim, exploring the violent relationship between the ruthless Michoacán cartels and the civilian militias that have formed to protect the people who the government can't (or won't). In a misguided attempt at comprehensiveness, Heineman contrasts one such group – the Autodefensas – with a racist lot of US vigilantes who call themselves the Arizona Border Recon. Lead by Tim "Nailer" Foley, the ABR claims to be patrolling the border for cartel activity spilling into the US, but their focus seems to be terrorising illegal aliens who cross into their state in search of a better life. Foley's narrative is static; the only drama in his portion of the film is that which he invents for himself. If only Heineman evinced such a flair for storytelling. **DAVID EHRLICH**

**ANTICIPATION.** *The world needs an incisive, sobering documentary about the Mexican drug cartels.*

3

**ENJOYMENT.** *A few gripping moments can't redeem a narrative that never finds its footing.*

2

**IN RETROSPECT.** *Heineman goes through the gates of Hell and comes back empty-handed.*

2





## Miss You Already

Directed by CATHERINE HARDWICKE  
 Starring TONI COLLETTE, DREW BARRYMORE,  
 PADDY CONSIDINE  
 Released 25 SEPTEMBER

Charity worker Jess (Drew Barrymore) and PR executive Milly (Toni Collette) have been friends since school, but when Milly is diagnosed with cancer, their relationship is placed under duress. Their favourite book growing up was 'Wuthering Heights', and its themes of cruelty and vengeance are explored in the context of a cancer patient who is angry at the world. Opening in a similar bittersweet manner to Garry Marshall's 1988 film, *Beaches*, itself an era-spanning drama focusing on a female-female friendship, the film introduces Jess as she's about to give birth at the end of the story. She's alone, and the only thing she wants is her best friend by her side. Despite the wealth of female talent involved, the core relationship between the two women rarely feels convincing, and the dialogue is strained. The script, by Morwenna Banks, acknowledges the stress a cancer patient would be under and how it can affect not only their actions but the actions of those around them. In this instance, Milly's husband, who she gets cold feet following her mastectomy, bears the brunt of her understandable bitterness. Her reaction to this also affects the relationship between Jess and her husband as they embark on IVF.

On the plus side, Collette brings her A-game to her portrayal of a cancer patient on the brink of destruction. Milly's journey through breast cancer, the reality of chemotherapy, hair loss and all the confusion that comes with her illness is confrontational, even though it occasionally starts to feel like an 'issues' movie. The fantastic British actress Frances de la Tour appears as a wigmaker in the most film's powerful scene which allows for silence and nervous laughter to do the talking. These moments where Banks' screenplay knows there's no need for words are dotted throughout, and often prove to be the most memorable and moving segments of the film.

KATHERINE MCLAUGHLIN

### ANTICIPATION.

*Sounds like Beaches for Millennials.*

3

### ENJOYMENT.

*There were tears but they felt manipulated.*

2

### IN RETROSPECT.

*Not even the mighty Toni Collette can save this.*

2



## Orion: The Man Who Would Be King

Directed by JEANIE FINLAY  
 Starring JIMMY ELLIS, SHELBY SINGLETON, JIM ELLIS  
 Released 25 SEPTEMBER

Elusive and haunting are descriptions that fit this documentary and its subject. Jimmy Ellis – the singer who sounded exactly like Elvis and never stepped out of his vocalganger's shadow – isn't here any more. His life is recounted in stages. Talking heads, footage of gaudily dressed, charismatic performances, his son's memories and recordings of his own musings are organised thematically. The effect is of peeling back the layers of an onion. But instead of a core, there are still more layers. Jeanie Finlay's investigative documentary is many things, but it is not an exposé.

So, what *is* it? A eulogy for a man who wanted to be more than a bizarre footnote in the history of Elvis impersonators? Or a eulogy for a man with a sorrowful beginning and an even more sorrowful end, who filled the interim years with his twin passions: music and women? The Ellis in old recordings has an easy charm that thrives even though he is always wearing spangly masks that evoke a disco-loving highwayman. These masks were the consequence of a too trusting deal with an exploitative music industry shark.

After The King's death, Ellis was relaunched as Orion, by a management intent on capitalising on the Elvis lives myth. He was contractually obliged to wear a mask. Like a glitzy leash, the masks are a permanent reminder that Ellis is not his own man. At the peak of his powers, no one knew his face. Finlay lets this bizarre reality and the infinite symbolic interpretations pulse beneath all the euphoric archive performances. There is a shaggy dog quality to the way that Ellis' life is presented because this is the story of a man that didn't quite make it. The story of the man who would be king is the story of lives that meander, not ending in glory, just ending.

SOPHIE MONKS KAUFMAN

### ANTICIPATION. Jeanie Finlay makes

*unusual and heartfelt music documentaries.*

3

### ENJOYMENT.

*Intentionally and richly impossible to grasp.*

4

### IN RETROSPECT. Shades of Carol Morley's

*Dreams of a Life-upon-Nashville.*

4





# Macbeth

Directed by

**JUSTIN KURZEL**

Starring

**MICHAEL FASSBENDER**

**MARION COTILLARD**

**PADDY CONSIDINE**

Released

**2 OCTOBER**

4

## ANTICIPATION.

*The original had a decent enough writer.*

4

## ENJOYMENT.

*Reinvented dynastic tragedy shows true grit.*

4

## IN RETROSPECT.

*The performances are astonishingly intense, their sound and fury signifying everything.*

**N**ext time you catch yourself lamenting modern cinema's unhealthy obsession with remakes and sequels, spare a thought for William Shakespeare, who 'reimagined' almost all his scripts from pre-existing sources, and followed one king's tale with another, even sub-dividing them into parts to 'cash in' on their success. And those plays were not just performed once, but have been restaged, reinvented, even rewritten to suit different audiences at different times.

Take the Scottish play, most famously turned to film by Orson Welles in 1948 and by Roman Polanski in 1971. Justin Kurzel may at first seem improbable as director of this latest iteration, given that his 2011 feature debut, *Snowtown*, was a work of gritty contemporary naturalism, ripped straight from the headlines and set in suburban Adelaide. Yet both works, as it happens, concern blood begetting more blood, as one act of murder leads to more, drawing everyone into its horrific orbit. And despite some stylised colour-filtering of the wintry Highlandcapes, Kurzel's *Macbeth* is misty, muddy, bloody, earthy affair – shot by *Snowtown*'s Adam Arkanaw partly in handheld close-ups that allow lines more commonly bellowed to be intimately whispered, and the tortured faces of Michael Fassbender (as Macbeth) and his Lady (Marion Cotillard) to come into harrowing focus.

Kurzel's added nuances reinvest Shakespeare with unexpected meaning. Opening with the deaths of Macbeth's two (newly invented) children adds a psychological dimension to Macbeth's subsequent resentment of other nobles' bloodlines,

and makes Lady Macbeth's imprecation of the spirits to, "Come to my woman's breasts and take my milk for gall," resonate with bitter grief. The decision to realise a crucial battle that in Shakespeare's play Banquo had merely described shows vividly the violence and viscera in which Macbeth's traumatised character is forged. Lady Macbeth's persuading of her hesitant husband to commit regicide is often staged as a seduction, but Kurzel has her actually masturbating Macbeth while laying out her design for murder, so that the words that mark Macbeth's resolve ("I am settled") come, in their post-climactic position, with a new double significance, utterly confounding sex and death, while reminding us of that famous dagger's essentially phallic nature.

The dagger, in Kurzel's version, is not imagined by Macbeth to be floating before him, but is shown there for real, held by the embodied ghost of Macbeth's war torn son. Indeed, Kurzel grounds all the play's supernatural elements in the material world. The witchy sisters may be 'weird', not least because they turn up in the middle of nowhere – or of pitched battles – but they are also flesh and blood, as are the ghosts (not just of Banquo, but of many a fallen soldier), haunting the film's world as much as Macbeth's mind with their uncanny presence. This physicality, along with the intensity of the performances, recasts Shakespeare's spookiest drama as a realist trip into PTSD. No matter if *Macbeth* remakes what was already written – after all, it always has been concerned with the prescribed nature of destiny. **ANTON BITEL**





# Justin Kurzel

## The *Macbeth* director opens up to *LWLies* on working with Michael Fassbender and how best to approach The Bard.

**LWLIES: WERE YOU BOMBARDED WITH REQUESTS FOR WORK AFTER THE SUCCESS OF YOUR DEBUT, *SNOWTOWN*?** Kurzel: Definitely by the time it played in London there was a real interest in the film for many reasons, the fact that it was quite a controversial was one of them. I started looking at scripts and talking to actors. That's how I got to know Michael [Fassbender], which was really after him seeing a screening of it in London. It all happened after about 12 months rather than directly after its Cannes premiere. I happened to be in London. His agent and mine got in contact and we met. It was lovely to be sitting with someone and to be able to talk about each other's work in a mutually respectful way.

**HOW DO MEETINGS LIKE THAT GO DOWN? WERE YOU IN A BAR OR SOMETHING?** It was in a bar. Michael is just really unpretentious, really normal and very approachable. When you're a director, you're surrounded by people and it's

quite rare to just sit down and talk with other actors or other directors. I keep on forgetting when you sit down with other artists just how comfortable and how normal it feels because you're talking the same language. He'd just done *Shame* and I was a huge fan of *Hunger* and I was really interested about how he found a way through those two films.

**DO YOU REMEMBER YOUR FIRST MEANINGFUL CONTACT WITH THE PLAY?** I was a production designer for 10 years so I came from theatre and I designed it many times. I was really inspired by the 11th century and the times of the real *Macbeth*. When you start reading about battles that go on for a year and you're defending your land from three different points of attack and you don't see your family and you have to stay awake to survive, I instantly thought that the cinema was a way to place you into that point of view of a warrior from that era, how he played off that exhaustion and trauma and sense of dislocation from family. That gave a human insight into their ambition, because it's usually played pretty straight in terms of the greed of wanting power and the greed of being ambitious.

**BOTH THIS AND *SNOWTOWN* EXPLORE THE MAGNETIC LURE OF POWER.** At the moment I'm working on *Assassin's Creed* which does have some similar themes to *Macbeth*, but at the same time I really responded to this play and maybe it's because there was some stuff from *Snowtown* which I hadn't yet finished with in terms of my real curiosity with darkness, the idea of dismantling one's self and how that occurs. There's something interesting in

*Snowtown* that was about the breakdown of family, yet no matter how dysfunctional it was, it was still a family. John Bunting came into this group of people and gave them a hope. There's a similar feel to *Macbeth*, in that he's a man who is driven by a need to have a family and an ambition to lead but then he is very interested in consciously dismantling that, he's also attracted to a darkness that almost liberates him. *Macbeth*, too, is attracted to a place that he knows he's never going to come back from, but he also finds a peace in it and I think that that's really compelling. Any character, particularly in cinema, that dances in that kind of light is automatically interesting.

**SO MUCH OF SHAKESPEARE IS ABOUT NUANCE. DID YOU FIND THAT YOU WERE DOING LOTS OF TAKES OF THE SOLILOQUIES TO MAKE SURE THAT THE ACTORS UNDERSTOOD WHAT THEY WERE SAYING?** Michael had read the text 200 times. This is his process, to know it inside out so you can then kind of forget it and know it in the moment as you're shooting it. Marion's process was quite different in that she was starting from a place that this was really foreign to her, the verse being English. I don't usually do a lot of takes. Always within the first and second take there seems to be a friction and there seems to be a danger and a freshness where things aren't overthought, and I was determined, even with this where words are being said thousands of times and this verse is very famous, I was adamant in trying to find an intimacy with it and making it feel much more grounded, almost conversational so that you weren't punching the poetry in it 🍷





# Pasolini

Directed by

**ABEL FERRARA**

Starring

**WILLEM DAFOE**

**RICCARDO SCAMARCIO**

**NINETTO DAVOLI**

Released

**11 SEPTEMBER**

4

## ANTICIPATION.

*Few combinations are so worthy of attention.*

2

## ENJOYMENT.

*Ferrara's approach to the material is distinctly off-balance.*

2

## IN RETROSPECT.

*Some indelible moments can't off-set a generally misjudged approach.*

Excepting whatever immediate associations its title might raise, those entering Abel Ferrara's *Pasolini* with any expectations are bound to come away disappointed. The fourth collaboration between the director and Willem Dafoe defies all biopic categorisations, for the most part as concerned with the histories between people and places as it is the final day of Pier Paolo Pasolini's life. In doing so, it truly lives up to the *sui generis* reputation that's built since its premiere at the 2014 Venice Film Festival. Alas, something was miscalculated in the helmer-star-subject equation.

Ferrara has evinced a knack for directorial subtlety and emotionally piercing drama numerous times, but it's telling that those points were often reached through ends more extreme than anything *Pasolini* has to offer. Consider the bullet-strewn *King of New York*, the tentacle-filled *Body Snatchers*, or the video-saturated *New Rose Hotel* – successes defined by an aggressive, sometimes assaultive approach to material that expresses no interest in letting its audience pass through unscathed.

Relative to what we might thus expect of his approach to the *Trilogy of Life* and *Salò* director's final day – brutal murder and all – much of *Pasolini* rings rather timid. Lest that suggest something more lurid was essential for the material, let it be said that much of this film's wisdom is rooted in its delineation of shocks. From the book-ending presence of violent acts to the appropriately graphic dramatisation of a never-realised project that itself takes up much of the second act, its most eye-opening portions are

structural and emotional markers through which one might consider the film in hindsight.

This still leaves large portions of a short film to contend with, though, and length becomes a major issue once its approach to the subject becomes clear. Nearly a quarter of *Pasolini* is spent inside the head of its eponymous subject, these portions devoted to visualising a mysterious death he'd been investigating and a feature he'd planned on producing. What could have been of immense interest, even just for offering a glimpse into his post-*Salò* mindset, is instead overdetermined and flat, in no small part because its attempts at visual psychology ultimately represents Ferrara more than Pasolini's work. The former is often welcome, but there nevertheless persists this sensation that more time with Pasolini's in-the-moment emotional state would have resulted in a greater portrait. For all that was surely required to stage these fantasies, they feel moot when a single gesture (eg Dafoe placing his hand on his forehead) can signify so much more of his stress and genius, or when an interview sequence (captured by a dancing camera and neatly framed two shots) verbally pronounces personal philosophy without sacrificing visual complexity.

These and other moments, including an unsparing death scene that's all the more fascinating and horrifying because it's so sapped of dignity or grace, *Pasolini* is impossible to dismiss. When its defining characteristics so often clash with and nullify each other, it feels no less difficult to love. **NICK NEWMAN**





# Sicario

Directed by  
**DENIS VILLENEUVE**

Starring  
**EMILY BLUNT**  
**BENICIO DEL TORO**  
**JOSH BROLIN**

Released  
**9 OCTOBER**

3

## ANTICIPATION.

*The latest from almost-but-not-quite man, Denis Villeneuve.*

4

## ENJOYMENT.

*A heady shot of technical pyrotechnics, a triumph of aesthetics over politics.*

3

## IN RETROSPECT.

*A visceral, in-the-moment ride-along more than a movie to chew over for any length of time.*

**P**risoners, Denis Villeneuve's first collaboration with the great DoP Roger Deakins, showed the Quebecois director could elicit sinister portent from just about any scenario without demonstrating any judgment about whether it was worth filming in the first place. *Sicario*, which reteams Villeneuve and Deakins, benefits immensely from not sliding into snakes-and-Satanists silliness, and is accordingly excruciatingly suspenseful for most of its running time. As recently depicted in Gerardo Naranjo's *Miss Bala*, Amat Escalante's *Heli* and Matthew Heineman's *Cartel Land*, the disastrous War on Drugs is understood primarily as a never-ending series of atrocities, most committed by implacably brutal Mexican cartels. What this presentation – with its emphasis on bodies hanging from bridges, borderland shootouts and other routine eruptions of extreme violence – leaves out is any kind of question as to why this is happening in the first place. It's not as widely understood as it should be that the unwinnable war on drugs is a terrifically effective way of enriching America's private prisons, but not good for much else; a film on the drug wars that shies away from any larger examination of the monstrous system behind it is a rather pointless thing.

*Sicario* doesn't have much to contribute to political dialogue besides the sentiment, 'You probably shouldn't trust anyone in the CIA,' which should already be staggeringly obvious. This large ideological caveat aside, the film is relentlessly effective at keeping viewer nerves frayed; the ominous slow dollies, zooms, close-ups and other acts of directorial aggression slathered over *Prisoners* work much better

with halfway credible material. The setup is very simple: FBI agent Kate (Emily Blunt) is recruited to join the ambiguously credentialed government agent Matt (Josh Brolin) in a raid on a major drug lord. What is presented as a simple action predictably leads to darker covert ops of dubious legality, offsite torture and all. Essentially a passive character, Kate acts as a viewer surrogate: the only choice she's given is to remove herself from the situation, but she's too curious to tear herself away.

With expert support from Brolin and a fully-engaged Benicio Del Toro as another mysteriously credentialed man, *Sicario* maintains a strong sense of menace in the unlikely settings: even a simple shot of Blunt taking a shower alone in her apartment conjures a slasher movie's worth of pent-up dread. A shoot-out in the crowded lanes at the border crossing makes expert use of changing traffic between protagonists and potential threat, the moving cars constantly resetting where gunfire might come from to ratchet the tension. The finale may well outdo Kathryn Bigelow's impressively low-light work in *Zero Dark Thirty*, alternately shooting a night raid through the equally sickly colour tones of green nightvision and red heat-seeking thermal glasses. Even quieter moments aren't immune from jolts: a shot of Del Toro sleeping on a plane slowly amps up a subliminal treble whine that grows into a sound reminiscent of screaming children, a nicely *Shining*-esque moment. But Johann Johansson's terrifically pummelling score represents the film's MO better: bring on the pounding tympani, maximise visceral thrills and don't stop to think. **VADIM RIZOV**





# Me and Earl and the Dying Girl

*Directed by*  
**ALFONSO GOMEZ-REJON**  
*Starring*  
**THOMAS MANN**  
**RJ CYLER**  
**OLIVIA COOKE**  
*Released*  
**4 SEPTEMBER**

3

## ANTICIPATION.

The Fault in Our Stars  
 for the hipster set.

4

## ENJOYMENT.

Ask us again when we're  
 done quietly sobbing into  
 our artisanal popcorn.

3

## IN RETROSPECT.

A gem from Gomez-Rejon.  
 Intrigued to see what he  
 does next.

**W**hat's the best way to treat someone with cancer? We're not speaking in a medical sense: how are you supposed to behave around someone – a casual acquaintance, say – who's been recently diagnosed with the disease? In director Alfonso Gomez-Rejon's disarmingly sincere second feature, which is just about the most affecting teen cancer comedy you could ever hope to see, this moral conundrum provides the catalyst for a transformative journey as travelled by the film's three chief protagonists.

During an opening rundown of a familiar high school caste system, Greg (Thomas Mann – the titular 'Me') reliably informs us that he has student life sussed thanks to a carefully cultivated social indifference towards canteen politics which, ironically, makes him the coolest kid in class. This apparent lack of self-objectivity doesn't exactly enamour us to Greg, but in making us aware of his insecurities and shortcomings so early on, Gomez-Rejon and screenwriter Jesse Andrews (adapting his own 2012 novel of the same name) establish a crucial character dynamic that later enables them to playfully expand on several core themes without distracting us from the serious and delicate nature of their chosen subject matter.

Principally, *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* is concerned with self-perception, the extent to which we can successfully control our external identity and how this affects how others see us. In the case of Olivia Cooke's 'Dying Girl', Rachel, this means continuing to flash her infectious smile at a time when doing so she requires a tremendous amount

of courage. For Greg, it means learning the true definition of empathy after his mother (Connie Britton) forces him to befriend the neighbourhood sympathy case, and how doing the right thing often means putting your own self-interests to one side. You don't need a film like *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* to tell you that the effects of cancer spread far beyond the individual sufferer, but that doesn't make Greg's catharsis any less meaningful.

*Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* won't jive with everyone. That Greg and Earl (RJ Cyler) are Criterion Collection obsessives who spend most of their spare time making low-grade parodies of such unequivocal classics as *Don't Look Now* ('Don't Look Now, Because a Creepy-Ass Dwarf is About to Kill You!!! Damn') and *Peeping Tom* ('Pooping Tom') pretty much tells you everything you need to know about its idiosyncratic sensibilities. But then this a film that has its cake and eats it, not in crumbs of dry, excessively tactful mawkishness but in heaped forkfuls of brightly frosted melodrama.

Tempting though it initially is to dismiss this double Sundance-winning coming-of-ager as yet another self-satisfied indie comedy offering only surface charms, the emotional payoff delivered in the tonally uneven third act confirms this as a work of real substance. The sharp jump in quality between this and Gomez-Rejon's previous, the 2014 meta slasher *The Town That Dreaded Sundown*, has led some critics to call out the director for engineering an all-the-feels crowd pleaser. That's an extremely cynical view to take of a distinctly uncynical film. **ADAM WOODWARD**





# Alfonso Gomez-Rejon

## The *Me and Earl...* director on death, Eno and Godard references.

**A**lfonso Gomez-Rejon dedicated *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* to his late father, who passed away shortly before production began. *LWLies* sat down with the director for a personal conversation about life, death and how the movies can blur the line between the two.

**LWLIES: I'VE HAD AN INTERESTING RELATIONSHIP WITH THIS MOVIE. I FIRST SAW IT AT SUNDANCE. SHORTLY AFTER I CAME HOME, I LEARNED THAT MY DAD HAD A GRADE IV BRAIN TUMOUR. WHEN I REVISITED IT IN ADVANCE OF THIS INTERVIEW, I HAD A VERY DIFFERENT EXPERIENCE. I FOUND IT MUCH MORE HOPEFUL.** Gomez-Rejon: You want to talk about that?

**SURE. I WAS STRUCK BY HOW OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PEOPLE WE LOVE CAN CONTINUE – AND DEEPEN – EVEN IN THEIR ABSENCE.** When I started this project, I was in such denial that I couldn't even see a photograph of my dad. He was my best friend – it was that hard. But I knew that by taking on this movie, I wanted to believe that scene by the end. So it was hopeful,

because I do, now. I do. There is some sort of continuum in the fact that we're talking about him, now. That I can talk about him. I put that dedication to him at the end of the movie, and the first time it screened with that was at Sundance. My mom didn't know about it, my sister didn't know about it, and what was so private became quite public. In a different way, of course – he's not the same shape, he's not as clearly defined – but now I start to pay attention to the people who try to tell me stories about him. And I listen to the stories and I realise... He was always the funniest person on the planet, and he was a physician who dedicated his life to reducing the stigma of mental illness. He changed so many lives, you know? And it was by making this movie that I needed to... You know, I lost my faith a long time ago – I think it comes from the territory of growing up with nuns in high school – but I do feel that it's keeping him alive. So I'm glad you found it hopeful, because it was a very healing thing for me to do.

**AT WHAT POINT DID YOU KNOW THAT YOU WERE BRINGING SOMETHING SPECIAL TO THE FESTIVAL?** I'm a very shy person by nature, and the last friends and family screening was in October, and then the next screening was with 1,400 people at Sundance. I was terrified and tired and had no voice, and I'm thinking, 'It's a movie that references Herzog and Pressburger – who's going to pay anything for this?' The real test was a screening we had for high school students. Who's going to get the *Contempt* reference? And many didn't. But afterwards a lot of them said they wanted to go out and find these movies, and that to me was the greatest thing.

**TELL US ABOUT WORKING WITH BRIAN ENO, WHO SUPPLIES THE FILM'S SOUNDTRACK.** This is the thing: I've never met him. It's only been through email. I'm *dying* to meet him.

**YOU HAVE A GOOD ICEBREAKER NOW.** Yeah. It was a discovery for me, because originally I wanted the whole movie to be scored by music from other movies. Not like the soundtrack to *Zazie dans le Metro*, but *The 400 Blows* is there, *The Conversation* is there... things that felt right. But on the last day of production, when I matched the movie Greg makes for Rachel to Eno's 'The Big Ship', and something happened. So I called my editor David Trachtenberg and told him to download 'Another Green World' to see if there might be other things in it that could work for us. Eventually we got the film to his Eno. I wrote his agent an email that he forwarded to Eno, and Eno responded to me directly. He really loved the movie, he loved how his music was used, and how it didn't underscore the emotion. And how all of these emotional currents are happening at the same time, and how that's like life and what he strives for in his music.

**THAT'S GOTTA BE A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE. BRIAN ENO LIKES YOUR MOVIE** But then it started that I would wake up and I'd have an email containing eight unreleased tracks from his vault. And then he'd send something else. And then towards the end it was, "I woke up thinking about your movie, and I wrote this." And the last one that he wrote, called 'Carved in Paper', is the one that plays over the end titles. It's used softly over Earl's testimony, too. It was almost a summary of the whole process 🌟





## Steamboat Bill, Jr (1928)

Directed by  
**CHARLES REISNER**  
Starring  
**BUSTER KEATON**  
**TOM MCGUIRE**  
**ERNEST TORRENCE**  
Released  
**18 SEPTEMBER**

5

### ANTICIPATION.

*Buster Keaton restored and back on the big screen is always welcome.*

5

### ENJOYMENT.

*A master on prime form, and the accompanying short The Playhouse is ingenious too.*

5

### IN RETROSPECT.

*Keaton has lost none of his ability to entertain and astonish.*

The cameras were ready to roll, but most of the crew couldn't bear to watch. Buster Keaton stepped onto his mark and waited for the wall of the house behind him to fall. If his measurements were correct – and they usually were – a window should land exactly where he stood, leaving him unscathed amid the wreckage. He had just two inches of clearance for his head and shoulders and the slightest miscalculation would be fatal, but Keaton later recalled feeling that he didn't really care if the house hit him or not. The day before they filmed this stunt he had received the news that his independent studio was to be shut down and, against the advice of Charlie Chaplin and Harold Lloyd, he was about to sign a contract with MGM.

Keaton would make one more film that was recognisably his at MGM – the intermittently brilliant *The Cameraman* – before the studio began exerting full control over his projects, but if *Steamboat Bill, Jr* was to mark the end of an era, at least Keaton ensured he went out with a bang. The climactic storm that destroys the town and very nearly destroys our hero is one of the most ambitiously conceived and brilliantly sustained comic set-pieces in cinema, with Keaton's jaw-dropping athleticism and endurance frequently being put to the test as he is buffeted by gale-force winds and sent hurtling down debris-strewn streets. Keaton had originally intended to end his film with a flood before a real-life disaster forced him to opt for a hurricane, "as a more restful type of calamity to watch," but there's nothing restful about the spectacle he puts on screen.

*Steamboat Bill, Jr* has sometimes been spoken of as a second-tier Keaton, justly celebrated for the climax but rarely discussed in glowing terms elsewhere or classed alongside acknowledged masterpieces such as *The General* or *Sherlock, Jr*. In fact, the full range of his brilliance is on display in this film, with the smallest and most keenly observed details often leading to the most cherishable moments. Has any screen actor ever been more expressive in their stillness? The scene in which Keaton's foppish city boy is ordered by his tough father to replace his beret with a proper working man's hat is one of the funniest he ever filmed, and all it consists of is him facing the camera while trying on an eclectic range of headwear and reacting in his typically understated fashion. It's a masterclass in comic timing and deadpan reaction shots, and a reminder that Keaton had few peers when it came to communicating with his eyes and the smallest of gestures.

Keaton's whole body was an extraordinary machine and the film has him running for his life and bouncing back from violent pratfalls throughout. To watch this film is to watch a man repeatedly throw himself into peril for the sake of comedy cinema, and perhaps there's an increased sense of urgency to this performance with the knowledge that he would never enjoy such freedom again. In the chaos of that astonishing storm, *Steamboat Bill, Jr* provides us with one of the defining images of this great star – a diminutive man poised at a 45 degree angle, bravely facing into the fierce winds, and determined to stay standing even as his whole world collapses around him. **PHIL CONCANNON**





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# Suffragette

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Directed by

**SARAH GAVRON**

Starring

**CAREY MULLIGAN**

**ANNE-MARIE DUFF**

**HELENA BONHAM-CARTER**

Released

**16 OCTOBER**

---

3

## ANTICIPATION.

*'The time is now' scream the posters.*

---

3

## ENJOYMENT.

*Reels a familiar yarn, but unlike its subjects, is wholly risk averse.*

---

2

## IN RETROSPECT.

*This would've made for a great TV serial.*

---

For better and for worse, Sarah Gavron's new film, *Suffragette*, is concerned with an anticlimax. On a literal, formal level, it presents history as agonisingly piecemeal, a series of loosely interconnected incidents which are undertaken at a moment's notice and with only a cursory discussion as to their intentions and targets. It's anticlimactic, too, in that here is a film concerning arguably the most eminent congregation of female activists fighting for acceptance and equality in modern history, and we know with the gift of hindsight that the spoils at the end of their violent campaign are meagre at best. Certainly, change was impacted as a result of their heavy sacrifice, but the shady spectre of

ingrained belief – that men and women are two separate species and should be treated as such – remains prevalent and, in some locales, unchallenged.

Screenwriter Abi Morgan has been saddled with the unenviable task of capturing and framing a victory – Pyrrhic or otherwise – to meet the demands of escapist movie audiences who require cause for celebration. Because we wouldn't be sat here if the whole thing was a righteous blow-out. The title of the film is conspicuously singular, referring to Carey Mulligan's Maud, a taciturn laundress with a glint in her eye, a Vera Drake cock-er-nee drawl, and a nice line in tilted navy berets. She is our conduit into Edwardian-era, proto-feminist empowerment, her innate sense of cheery subservience having been chipped away over the years by an ineffectual husband (Ben Wishaw), a lecherous boss (Geoff Bell) and tyrannical copper (Brendan Gleeson).

At its best, *Suffragette* is a film about taking heed of the benefits of democracy, even when that democracy isn't working for you. It critiques politicians – harshly, but fairly – in their inability to see the problems that sit right at the end of their bulbous noses. You could switch out the cause of universal female suffrage with any hot button political concern, and the film would serve it amply. That's both its great success and its great failing – in making this struggle feel generic, it betrays the bloody defiance in which these women were regularly engaging, as well as the fact that theirs was a specifically defined entitlement.

The problem with this movie, and with many movies like it, is a desperation to make it known that the people we're watching are great, they are heroes and they changed the world as we know it. This is often attained by stating the fact point blank, though here it's achieved by the strict dividing lines of all female characters being good and all male characters being bad. There are no Suffragettes in *Suffragette* who found fault in the methods of the illusive Emmeline Pankhurst (a gussied-

up cameo by Meryl Streep), who assured that years of passive struggle had been useless and that civil disobedience was the order of the day. Only Marie-Anne Duff's Violet Cambridge is shown as optioning out of necessary activities, though only due to a fear of returning to prison, nothing that might infer internal antagonisms. It would seem futile to complain that this film wasn't more like Steve McQueen's 2008 debut feature, *Hunger*, that is to say an exemplary and nuanced depiction of the point where protest mutates into self-sacrifice. While their thematic aims are similar, the stylistic aims couldn't be more different. The former involves gruelling lassitude, while the latter is packed with incident. The most effective sequences in *Suffragette* are those in which Gavron chronicles the process of horrors that befell these women, such as being force-fed in prison. But this can't be that film. It's not built that way. That's not its intention.

A few horrific connective fudges to make sure that certain characters are all in the same place at the same time sours the experience during a rushed final stretch. It's a strange positive, though, that you're left with the bittersweet feeling that these are people you want to spend more time with, to learn more about, that the film cuts you off short. Mulligan's indomitable everywoman is a humdrum character imbued with life and warmth via the actor's apparent refusal to succumb to garish melodrama. She makes certain it's a tougher film than expected, with regular bouts of suffering seldom lingered over. The film's most moving moment, however, is a climactic hard-cut from a staged funeral procession for a fallen conscript to newsreel footage of the real event. It's not just the twisting phalanx of women in wide-brimmed hats soberly march through the streets, using the body of a martyr as a political bargaining chip. It's that film is itself a political tool, and that Gavron and Morgan at least attempt to wield in in the same confrontational manner as their forebears. **DAVID JENKINS**











# Carey Mulligan

**The British actress describes the brutal realities of the Suffragette movement and explains why she wanted to be involved in a new film about their struggles.**

**LWLIES: YOU'VE PREVIOUSLY SAID THAT YOU ONLY ACCEPT A ROLE IF YOU CAN'T BEAR THE THOUGHT OF SOMEONE ELSE PLAYING IT. WHAT MADE YOU FEEL POSSESSIVE OF MAUD?**

Mulligan: It was a lot of things. It wasn't just the character, it was the story. It was just surprising to me that this story hadn't been told, even though it happened 100 years ago; this massive moment in women's history, and in civil rights in Britain, just hasn't ever really been put on screen. So it was the character, because she was unlike most characters I've played before, and the story in general, and then the creative team that was behind it, who were an exciting bunch of people. But largely because I felt so surprised by so much of the stuff I read in the script and was excited to put it on screen.

**SO IT'S FAIR TO SAY THAT, FOR ONCE, THE CAUSE WAS MORE IMPORTANT TO YOU THAN THE CHARACTER?**

Yeah, I think I would have played any character in the film if that had been an opportunity because I was excited about what the film was saying on a bigger scale. But the character was exciting because of how she starts the story: she's an introvert, she doesn't

have any friends, and she starts completely politically apathetic, not interested in the women's movement and very traditional. She's a very typical Victorian working class woman, she lives within the construct of her society and she's very happy in that. She doesn't want to explore the outside world and then she goes through this radical change. So I was equally drawn to her. But it was all of the stuff that was in the film, the stuff that I just didn't know about. I don't know what we studied in school, I guess it was a very sanitised version of women's history and the suffrage movement. But I didn't know about hunger striking, I didn't really know about police brutality. I think I knew that there were women who chained themselves to railings, but really to explore all of that stuff was exciting.

**YEAH, IT'S KIND OF A CARICATURE ISN'T IT, THE SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT, IN THE POPULAR CONSCIOUSNESS?**


Yeah, you sort of have an image of women walking through the streets with flowers and having tea and it's all lovely, and the reality was just so different. I was so surprised. We live in this world where every five minutes they make a film about the new story that happened a day ago, or a week ago, and the minute something either very brilliant or very tragic happens, there are seven people in Hollywood writing scripts about it. And yet this story happened and Emily Wilding Davison died, and all of these amazing moments in history happened and no one's ever talked about it, really.

**DID YOU AT ANY POINT EVER ASK YOURSELF, IF YOU HAD BEEN AROUND IN 1912, WOULD YOU HAVE BEEN A SUFFRAGETTE?**

Yeah, I have and I don't know. It was very normal to accept society's conventions at that time. I wonder if I would have been because you think about the reality of what these women did, it was kind of crazy. Even, you know, going on a hunger strike and being force-fed, I mean that stuff is just un-

bearable to think about. I can't even imagine the will it must have taken for those women to endure that, but even women who went into art galleries and slashed famous works of art. I don't know if I would have the guts to do that, that's a terrifying thing to do. Can you imagine going into the V&A today, walking up to a painting, getting a knife out, and slashing it? I mean it's a crazy act of bravery or recklessness or whatever you call it.

**ARTS AND WRITING AND ACTING, IT'S ALMOST A SAFE SPACE IN WHICH TO BE POLITICAL, RATHER THAN ACTUAL STREET ACTIVISM.**

We're able to tell the story about it, but they burned down churches and blew up buildings. The hunger striking is extraordinary. We had a man come in to talk to us about the hunger striking and the force-feeding. I think it was a sort of a protest against Guantanamo or something that he had gone through. He'd agreed to go on a hunger strike and be force-fed as part of a PSA or an experiment to basically show people what it was like to be force-fed and how brutal it was. He did it very clinically with lots of medical input and before he did it, he had a certain amount of vitamins which none of these women had. They just stopped eating. He went through all of this stuff and then he was force-fed. There is also a video of Mos Def doing it online, he did it as part of a campaign against force-feeding. You see that they get the tube about as far as to the top of his oesophagus, and he freaked out and they have to get it out and he can't do it, and it's unbelievable, it's horrible to watch. And we're talking about modern, 21st century medical tubing that they use now, which is all sanitary and as small as it can be. These women just had plastic, rubber pipes shoved down their noses and completely unclean. It's just brutal, what they went through and the amount of people who did it. I think there was one suffragette who was force-fed something like 240 times. That, I just can't ever imagine I would be strong enough to be able to endure that 



# The Lobster

Directed by  
**YORGOS LANTHIMOS**

Starring  
**COLIN FARRELL**  
**RACHEL WEISZ**  
**BEN WHISHAW**

Released  
**16 OCTOBER**

4

## ANTICIPATION.

*Can maverick Lanthimos kick on with a marquee cast without losing his radical mojo?*

3

## ENJOYMENT.

*Lanthimos' determination to drain the film of emotion leaves it feeling somewhat academic.*

4

## IN RETROSPECT.

*Appreciation for the sheer conceptual confidence of the film gathers momentum once you think back over it.*

For Yorgos Lanthimos, in life as in the movies, it's all in the game. In his breakthrough 2009 feature, *Dogtooth*, a controlling father set out to constrain his three grown-up children within a cultural and linguistic alternative universe, while his 2011 follow-up, *Alps*, featured a mysterious coterie of hospital workers impersonating lost loved ones to heal grieving families. This time, to go with a bigger budget and English dialogue, he's widened the scope considerably: now it's an entire society setting an extreme agenda, maintaining the heteronormative imperatives of coupledness with an unyielding enforcement regime. Colin Farrell's poor schlub, for instance, has just been dumped by his missus, so he's shipped off to a country hotel with all the other singletons, the object being to pair him with a new woman inside 45 days – or face the consequences. Those still left on the shelf are used as hunting fodder, or at worst forcibly transformed into an animal of their own choosing. That bright-eyed collie at Farrell's heel? It's actually his brother, another casualty of the dating game.

Okaayyyyy. If that sounds like it's just getting a bit too silly, fear not, since the whole animal transformation angle is more of an audience-baiting ruse than an essential part of the narrative, which is more dystopian satire than surreal flouncery. Like Luis Buñuel and Michael Haneke before him, Lanthimos creates looking-glass worlds as a way of goading us into reconsidering everyday presumptions – here picking apart the social fetishisation of the couple, considering whether pairing-off in practice means faking it to match a

prospective partner's nesting checklist. For fellow inductee Ben Whishaw, that means whacking himself to force the nosebleeds he hopes will endear him to a similarly afflicted female, thus presenting his best chance of leaving the hotel alive.

Fans of Lanthimos' previous work will be glad to hear that his slightly evil sense of humour remains intact, but newcomers drawn in by the high-profile arthouse casting – a de-glammed Rachel Weisz is singularly beguiling as a rather forlorn forest-dwelling loner – may take time to attune themselves to his defiant aesthetic, which bleaches the colour from the images and has his esteemed actors rather perversely dial-down their performances. The intent is evidently so the film's ideas aren't blurred by any messy emotional resonance, probably making it easier to admire than to enjoy.

In the end though, *The Lobster's* sheer thought-through singularity leaves a lasting impression, since here is a film-maker in control of every single aspect of his craft, delivering an unusual and uncompromising vision. So often classical music is used to give a film a quick emotional fix, yet Lanthimos's startlingly adept use of string quartets from Beethoven to Britten and Shostakovich not only sets exactly the right mood of edgy contemplation but also makes a particularly apposite thematic fit, since the quartet form remains the ultimate demonstration of how individual instrumental voices and effective ensemble scoring are both needed to realise expressive compositional intensity. Together and apart, it all contributes to the same score. **TREVOR JOHNSTON**





# Ariane Labeled

## LWLies speaks to the up-and-coming Greek actress about anti-performance and the nature of love.

**A**riane Labeled is a Greek-born French-based actress who trained in theatre and made her screen debut in 2010 as the star of Athina Rachel Tsangari's *Attenberg*. While making that film she met Yorgos Lanthimos, who cast her in 2011's *Alps* and now *The Lobster*.

**LWLIES: IN *THE LOBSTER*, THERE IS ONE GROUP OF PEOPLE WHO THINK THAT IT'S VERY IMPORTANT FOR HUMAN BEINGS TO BE IN A RELATIONSHIP AND ONE GROUP WHO THINK THAT IT'S VERY IMPORTANT FOR HUMAN BEINGS TO BE ALONE. WHICH OF THESE ABSOLUTE STANCES ARE YOU CLOSEST TO?** Labeled: I don't really want to take this kind of position. I think that the point of the story is that the heroes are trying to find another way to be, out of these two worlds, and to still be in love and to find their own way to be in love. That would be what we all would love to have: to have your own world and your own way to be in a couple. I don't really want to choose between the two. Anything too absolute and too extreme is craziness. That's what the movie shows as well.

**DO YOU FEEL PRESSURE FROM ONE SIDE OR THE OTHER, EITHER TO BE SINGLE AND INDEPENDENT OR TO BE THE PICTURE OF RELATIONSHIP SECURITY?** I guess we all feel pressure in our society. If you are single, yeah, for sure, everyone around you is waiting for you to be with somebody. When you are in a couple, there are some ways that you have to act and to be. Either way, society makes us feel like we have to act in a specific way because we have some codes and some things that we learn from our parents and do the same again and again from one generation until the other.

**IT'S ONE THING TO SAY THAT EXTREMES ARE CRAZY AND IT'S ANOTHER TO ESCAPE FROM THAT CRAZINESS. WHAT IS YOUR PHILOSOPHICAL VIEW? CAN WE ESCAPE AND MAKE OUR OWN WAY IN THE WORLD?** Of course I don't know. But it's at least important to try and to think and to rethink. That's what Yorgos is doing. I really like his work for that. He is trying to have another look at things around us and that's his position. There are no answers. It's not like a moral thing. To think about what's normal in everyday life in another way with a new look, somehow. That's what I would like to do in my own life and that's what the film is posing.

**YORGOS LANTHIMOS DIRECTS SUCH DEADPAN PERFORMANCES. DOES IT FEEL LIKE YOU'RE EVEN ACTING?** He doesn't really want us to act. If he sees somebody acting, he'll stop them right away. There are some codes in cinema and theatre and you just don't believe them. He doesn't say much on set. In the way that it's written, it gives us a very clear direction. It has

this very specific language. That's the way he works with his co-writer, Efthymis Fillipou. If you say the line, it's already a direction. There are very simple, physical directions, like, 'She looks down', like very technical. He would never go for something psychological, that's for sure.

**HOW DO YOU STOP YOURSELF FROM ACTING?** I don't feel like I'm stopping myself from acting, actually. It's just trying not to do more than what is needed. Just be there to talk to somebody and say the line and that's it. It lets us be more present, actually.

**WAS IT VERY DIFFERENT TO ACT IN THE NATURALISTIC WORLD OF RICHARD LINKLATER'S *BEFORE MIDNIGHT*?** I enjoyed it so much with Linklater – a very different kind of aesthetic, of course. The way that it's written, again, gives a huge direction to the actors. The rhythm is like music so we just have to follow that.

**HOW DID JUSTIN KURZEL CONTACT YOU FOR *ASSASSIN'S CREED*?** The casting director, Jina Jay, contacted me and I went for an audition. I think he knew me from *Alps*, where I play a gymnast. They were searching for somebody physical. I went for the audition and I liked it and so I'm doing it! I could never imagine that I would do something like that. It's different because I have to work with green screen. It's an action movie. It's not exactly my world, so now it feels like, 'Oh my god, they're inviting me somewhere else and I don't know how it works,' and I'm excited. I will start shooting in September and it will be everywhere in Europe 🌍



## The Birth of a Nation

Directed by <b>DW GRIFFITH</b>	<b>1915</b>
Starring <b>LILLIAN GISH</b> <b>MAE MARSH</b> <b>HENRY B WALTHALL</b>	<i>Out Now</i>
	<i>Blu-ray</i>

One hundred years down the line from its inception seems like the perfect time to take another glimpse at DW Griffith's "mighty spectacle", a film whose breathtaking technical bravura runs in abject contradiction to its blunderbuss racial stereotyping which, through modern eyes, appears as almost comically regressive. The film takes great pains and almost 90 minutes to build its raft of conditions. The second half then explores the carpetbagging mayhem that ensued after the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. As usual with Griffith, a romantic melodrama which develops through wild happenstance is thread through an histrionic epic in which two American families – one northern, one southern – become natural enemies when the civil war breaks out. Sub-titled 'Reconstruction', the second half proposes a crude thesis regarding a potential slave uprising (and violent revenge against white slave owners), and Griffith ushers in the Ku Klux Klan as the hooded saviours of America and their Aryan birthright. The question of whether we can now dismiss the abhorrent attitudes of the film as quaint, archaic and not worthy of sophisticated scrutiny is a decision that individual viewers will need to make on their own. Much of Griffith's pioneering work with crowd scenes, parallel storytelling, breathless action sequences, lighting and framing can be seen in superior later works such as 1916's *Intolerance* or his masterpiece from 1921, *Orphans of the Storm*, yet this really was the lodestone for much of that great work. The near-unwatchable sequence where Mae Marsh's Flora Cameron opts for death over marriage with a free slave who pursues her through a forest also happens to be a staggering piece of editing and spacial organisation. This new BFI Blu-ray offers crystal-clear emphasis on its glories and its outrages in equal measure. **DAVID JENKINS**



## Dragon Inn

Directed by <b>KING HU</b>	<b>1967</b>
Starring <b>LINGFENG SHANGGUAN</b> <b>CHUN SHIH</b> <b>YING BAI</b>	<i>Out Now</i>
	<i>Blu-ray</i>

Here's a scene in Harmony Korine's *Spring Breakers* in which James Franco's tin-pot gangster Alien boasts of owning a TV which plays *Scarface* on a loop all day, every day. You could imagine that if Quentin Tarantino ever succumbed to petit gangsterism, his TV would show King Hu's 1967 martial arts epic, *Dragon Inn*. This is the simple tale of a demonic eunuch attempting to cleanse the country of a rival family – "you must not chop down the grass, but pull up the roots," is his poetic way of justifying mass murder. Though his scouts are assigned to take care of this act of honour-driven butchery, the remnants of the family, all sons and daughters, manage to flee and hide out in the vicinity of the eponymous half-way house. As vicious clans of soldiers close in on their ineffectual prey, a rag-tag group of rebels take on the duty of defending these pups, their superior fighting skills making them near-omnipotent as they twang arrows back through windows and pummel hoards of screaming minions using only the sheath of their sword. The film is a triumph of narrative economy, and edited in a manner in which there is absolutely no room for waste. A character will say they are going somewhere, then we hard cut to them arriving at that place – there's seldom colour shots of people walking or chances to soak up the landscape. This is unforgivably terse filmmaking, and even though Hu sees little value in banal action, the film is chock-full of fight sequences that have been choreographed with immaculate precision. In the climactic stand-off, the four heroes begin to encircle the evil eunuch to send him into a tailspin, and as shot from above, it looks like the solar system in blade-swinging overdrive. A vital restoration by Masters of Cinema. **DAVID JENKINS**





## Dragon's Return

Directed by <b>EDUARD GREČNER</b>	<b>1968</b>
Starring <b>RADOVAN LUKAVSKÝ GUSTÁV VALACH EMÍLIA VÁSÁRYOVÁ</b>	Out Now
	DVD

Films like *The Return of Martin Guerre* and *Sommersby* cultivate a mystery by way of suggesting that the protagonist returning to his homestead after a lengthy time in exile could be harbouring some kind of dark intent. This fuggy Slovakian parable from 1968 by Eduard Grečner applies a similar rule, with the twist being that the main character, Dragon (the ultra-surly Radovan Lukavský), a potter who was forcibly deposed from his dirt-poor mountain hamlet, didn't really do anything wrong. He re-enters the fray at the beginning of the film sporting a mean-looking eye-patch, a brilliant technical touch which suggests that Dragon is not a man to be meddled with. It's a simple tale of parochial paranoia where Dragon is a walking symbol of civic misdeed whose very existence reminds the denizens of the village that their destructive politicking will have drastic repercussions. As we learn why Dragon was sent away through flashback, we also see a parallel present-tense storyline in which he is entirely willing to forgive, forget and carry on with his life as before, if allowed to. He doesn't even pine for the woman he loved, happy for her to remain with a new partner as long as it means that he doesn't have to set off once more into the precipitous climes that border between Slovakia and Poland. The film celebrates collective endeavour when it goes smoothly, suggesting that communities are vital for the continuation of mankind, yet it is ultimately about how difficult it is to achieve that deceptively simple dream. The receptacles that Dragon produces are large bell-like water carriers that are covered in random sharp spikes – the perfect metaphor for an elemental film which is very clear about the daily dangers we encounter from the prejudices of our fellow man. **DAVID JENKINS**



## Cruel Story of Youth

Directed by <b>NAGISA OSHIMA</b>	<b>1960</b>
Starring <b>KUWANO MIYUKI KAWAZU YŪSUKE KUGA YOSHIKO</b>	Out Now
	Blu-ray

Here's a scene in Nagisa Oshima's second feature, *Cruel Story of Youth*, in which the youthful couple at the film's centre are engaging in yet another petty argument. And much like previous arguments, it all ends up with one party repeatedly slapping the other party about the face. (Punching or more full-force pugilism is never preferable to this stinging and demeaning form of physical aggression.) Kawazu Yūsuke's delinquent drifter Kiyoshi beats his girlfriend, Makoto (Kuwano Miyuki), to the floor. She lays on a pile of sand in her checked sky blue summer dress, now desensitised to the splenetic beatings she receives. She stares up at Kiyoshi and he stares back down at her. Then there's a cutaway shot of a cement mixer. We hold for about five seconds, then back to the staring. Oshima's vision of a tortured teen romance is one that is doomed from the off. There isn't even the safety net of a country to be proud of, into which these tearaways would actually want to sink their roots. Squalor and contempt breeds squalor and contempt, and this film presents fraught lovers who oscillate between sweaty and awkward lovemaking to savage violence, with absolutely nothing in between. After saving her from being raped at the beginning of the film, Kiyoshi is introduced as a knight in shining armour, only for that wholesome image to be quashed in the subsequent scene which, kicks off a lengthy course of sexual and psychological abuse. Made at the same time as the kids of the French New Wave were enshrining puppy love in real locations, *Cruel Story of Youth* is a film apparently hell-bent on quashing any suggestion that hope springs eternal for the wide-eyed post-war generation. The final shot surely must rank as one of the most utterly bleak in the history of cinema. **DAVID JENKINS**



## The Man Who Wasn't There

Directed by <b>JOEL AND ETHAN COEN</b>	<b>2001</b>
Starring <b>BILLY BOB THORNTON FRANCES MCDORMAND SCARLETT JOHANSSON</b>	<i>Out Now</i>
	<i>Blu-ray</i>

A minor film that shines light on why the Coen brothers are such major filmmakers, *The Man Who Wasn't There* is a singularly droll neo-noir that looks at the genre through a funhouse mirror. Combining intimately familiar tropes with a protagonist so laconic that he frustrates them all, watching an unexceptional man find some perverse sense of purpose once the needle on his moral compass has been flicked so hard that it has no hope of ever finding true north again. The "action", so to speak, is set in Santa Rosa, California during the summer of 1949. Billy Bob Thornton stars as Ed Crane, a barber by trade and a terse human doormat by nature. ("Me, I don't talk much. I just cut the hair.") As the film begins, the chain-smoking mute is subtly starting to chafe against the meaninglessness of his existence, an existential crisis sparked by a passing stranger's offer to invest in a magical new technology called dry cleaning, and kindled by the discovery that Ed's wife (Frances McDormand, natch) is sleeping with local department store kingpin, Big Dave (James Gandolfini). *The Man Who Wasn't There* isn't exactly a barn-burner on par with the likes of *Double Indemnity*, but there's some magic in how the film slowly drifts towards the ceiling like the whirls of smoke that stream out of Ed's cigarettes. Charmed with dark irony, stuffed with the usual coterie of brilliant supporting performances (Michael Badalucco, Jon Polito, and Tony Shalhoub have the honors, here), and draped in Roger Deakins' magnificent monochrome cinematography, the film reaches an end that's familiar for such stories, but it gets there by most unusual means. Life is random and strange, but it always seems to resolve itself in much the same way. As Ed's wife announces to him one evening, "Our reward is on this Earth, and bingo is probably the extent of it." **DAVID EHRLICH**



## Vanilla Sky

Directed by <b>CAMERON CROWE</b>	<b>2001</b>
Starring <b>TOM CRUISE PENÉLOPE CRUZ CAMERON DIAZ</b>	<i>Out Now</i>
	<i>Blu-ray</i>

They say write what you know, and that's a maxim Cameron Crowe has always taken to heart. As a follow-up to the vividly autobiographical *Almost Famous*, however, Crowe decided to remake a Spanish sci-fi film about cryogenic freezing. Unsurprisingly, it didn't work out too hot. On the other hand, *Vanilla Sky* is also a vanity film about the perils of vanity, a story about a fall from grace that resulted from the collaboration between two men at the height of their careers. It's an attempt to subvert the romantic comedy genre by a director who had all but perfected it in the '90s, and it's a collection of pop culture references – 428 of them, if Crowe's ambiguous count is to be believed – that cohere into a film made by someone whose entire life has been defined by his tortured relationship with the wide world of "cool". Perhaps it's fitting that this contradictory curio, in which all is explained but nothing quite adds up, begins with the furtive digital tones of Radiohead's 'Everything in its Right Place'. *Vanilla Sky* tumbles through the soft-focus subconscious of David Aames (Tom Cruise), the arrogant heir to his late father's media fortune. A womaniser who's being stalked by his latest conquest (Cameron Diaz) when he meets her guileless usurper (Penelope Cruz) on a night that he wishes could last forever, David is scared of heights and poised for a fall. Yeah, he gets driven off a bridge and locked inside a Lucid Dream, but the details of his collapse are never remotely as interesting as their melancholic velocity. This is a strikingly pre-9/11 film that was released in the immediate aftermath of America's greatest disaster, and that's how it resonates most. The first act romanticises a particular moment in time to an unsustainable degree, while everything that follows tries to make sense of how things could ever have been that good, that pure. **DAVID EHRLICH**





## The Cat Returns

Directed by <b>HIROYUKI MORITA</b>	<b>2002</b>
Starring <b>IKEWAKI CHIZURU HAKAMADA YOSHIHIKO MAEDA AKI</b>	Out Now
	Blu-ray

**T**here's pretty much only one thing you need to know in order to live a happy life, and it's this: never watch the English dub of a Japanese film (or anything else, for that matter). Of course, for every rule, there are always sublime exceptions. One of them is the beloved television series *Cowboy Bebop*, and the other is the dub that Disney oversaw for the Stateside release of Hiroyuki Morita's *The Cat Returns*, in which Elliott Gould voices a stone raven and Tim Curry does his best John Goodman impression as a sociopathic feline king who rides a palanquin and rocks a giant grey moustache. As if that weren't enough, Peter Boyle assumes the role of a morbidly obese cat named Renaldo Moon, who's eventually revealed to be a notorious criminal with a genocidal hunger for fish. As the only sequel or spinoff in Studio Ghibli's peerless filmography (expanded from a subplot in 1995's *Whisper of the Heart*), *The Cat Returns* is often dismissed as a derivative bastard of an otherwise pure body of work. And yet, to briefly describe just three of the movie's many colourful characters is enough to recognise that Morita's directorial debut is nothing if not original. This 2002 adventure begins with a schoolgirl named Haru who uses her lacrosse stick to save a cat from being hit by a truck. But, it turns out, Haru hasn't just rescued any cat, but the prince of the Cat Kingdom, to whom Haru is promptly betrothed. Unfolding like an enjoyably reckless cross between *The Wizard of Oz* and Haruki Murakami's 'The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle', *The Cat Returns* never coheres into the ode to personal growth that it professes to be, but the details it sheds from its strange world are richer than most entire animated features, and this crisp new Blu-ray makes it easier than ever to enjoy every last one of them. **DAVID EHRLICH**



## Blind Chance

Directed by <b>KRZYSZTOF KIESLOWSKI</b>	<b>1987</b>
Starring <b>BOGUSLAW LINDA TADEUSZ LOMNICKI ZBIGNIEW ZAPASIEWICZ</b>	Released <b>15 SEPT</b>
	Blu-ray

**O**f all the films to inspire a Gwyneth Paltrow rip-off... Krzysztof Kieslowski's first fiction feature – shot in 1981, but suppressed until 1987 by the Communist regime that controlled Poland at the time – hinges on a brilliantly simple idea: a young man named Witek (Bogusław Linda) sprints to catch a train. Improbably, he grabs ahold of the last car and pulls himself aboard. He encounters a grizzled old Communist, who offers him a place to stay and encourages him to join the party. Witek happens upon his first love on the way to a meeting, and the two of them soon consummate their mutual crush. For more than an hour, the film powers on under the guise of a reasonably linear drama. And then, abruptly, the story resets. Witek is back at the train station, but this time he tumbles into someone and misses the train. As a result of this incidental collision, he winds up becoming a hyper-religious member of the anti-Communist resistance, a path which has its own obstacles. In the third and final variation, Witek misses the train once again, but this time he meets a girl. She becomes his wife and together they become a family. Witek grows avowedly apolitical. Then: horror. Between its violently inquisitive meditation on destiny and happenstance, punctuations of classical music and a preoccupation with public transport as the modern world's greatest vehicle of fate, *Blind Chance* can't help but feel like a dry run for Kieslowski's monumental *Three Colours* trilogy. The dazzling purity of its expression and the impossible tangle of questions sparked by its premise are diluted by the film's inability to transcend the theoretical dimension of its design. Kieslowski's conclusion that ideology is a matter of circumstance is a damning indictment to those held under its sway, but Witek's situation only transcends the theoretical via the savage violence of his final destination. **DAVID EHRLICH**

# Il Cinema Ritrovato



It feels wrong to besmirch the good name of Bologna's annual Il Cinema Ritrovato with the epithet of 'film festival', as it's a term which has come to signify a commercially-driven gathering which has more in common with a country meat market than a celebration of the seventh art. A pass for entry into every screening costs a paltry sum (*LWLies* personal average price per film was €1.60), there's no-one on the door checking bags or evoking an atmosphere of Cold War paranoia, most films are screened on 35mm prints, and – most vitally – everyone seems happy to be there. There is smiling and laughing. Imagine? The programme consists entirely of archive features, selected by a cadre of trusted cinephile lifers and overseen by the charismatic, novelty-spectacled Gian Luca Farinelli. There's not an over-reliance on placing already touted canonical classics at the forefront of the festival literature, or using well-known films as catnip to lure in unsuspecting or indecisive clientele. Bologna is all about discovering rough pearls that you keep and can store and shine-up later.

The comedy titan Leo McCarey was the focus of a retrospective, his slapstick silent shorts, featuring such early screen rascals as Max Davidson, Charlie Chase and Laurel and Hardy, all played with beautiful live accompaniments. We got to see his great early features, like 1939's *Love Affair*, and were reminded of the immense and easy charm of wry screen siren Irene Dunne. They screened his late films too, when his religious zealot side became more pronounced: 1945's *The Bells of St Mary's*, featuring Bing Crosby at his most smugly slappable, is a saccharine scab on the grimy kneecap of decency. Ingrid Bergman's beaming face graced the cover of the giant Il Cinema Ritrovato programme guide, and audiences were treated to a selection of her early, foreign language works. Quaint Swedish crime comedy *The Count of the Old Town* from 1935 was her first credited screen performance, and she

effortlessly steals the film in a generic love interest role. 1938's German-language *The Four Companions* quashed the hope of independent enterprise and gender empowerment by having her head up a failing all-female graphic design concern and in thrall to a vile career misogynist.

Colour was a hot topic, with a side-bar dedicated to Technicolor in which archivists from across the globe were asked to bring a random movie along with them. So we got a ritzy new restoration of Charles Vidor's *Cover Girl* from 1944, with Rita Hayworth's russet locks looking more fulsome and sublime than ever. In dazzling colour, but not part of this strand, was Bert Stern's *Jazz on a Summer's Day* from 1959, an atmospheric document of the Newport Jazz Festival where throngs of affluent musos take in some of the greatest acts of the day. Seeing Anita O'Day perform 'Sweet Georgia Brown' in the 37 degree heat of Bologna was a vapour-inducing highlight. Such is this festival's commitment to cinematic inquisitiveness, a selection of early colour films from Japan, mostly from the mid-'50s, played with mixed success. As with all historical excavation, you have to find your share of smashed pottery before locating the shiny gold coins, and so it was with this selection which ranged from the lacklustre – Koji Shima's *The Golden Demon* from 1954, about the world's most ineffectual loan shark – to the lightly effervescent – Toshio Sugie's *So Young, So Bright*, from 1955, a mambo-themed girl group musical comedy about the perils of sex slavery! At the centre of the festival, a panel discussion took place regarding the future of film (the material rather than the medium). Alexander Payne was there explaining how his personal 35mm prints of *Citizen Ruth* and *Election* have both started to spoil, even though he had them stored in perfect refrigerated conditions. We need festivals like this to energeise the film community, reminding those inside what they need to save for those on the outside 🍷



# New Horizons



It isn't just the multi-faceted programming at New Horizons that makes it tempting to simply list a string of superlatives by way of description. Such is the cultivation of the 'festival' element – with gigs, outdoor screenings and parties every night – the emphasis on celebration proved infectious. Taking place over a sweltering 11 days at the end of July in Wrocław, Poland, it's a remarkably inclusive and accessible (not to mention affordable) proposition for those keen to catch the Cannes heavy-hitters away from the Côte d'Azur scrum and months ahead of their London debuts.

Audiences here take their cinema seriously – and take their serious cinema seriously – with 10am screenings of forgotten Soviet esoterica as packed as the midnight showings of the likes of Gaspar Noé's *Love*. With democratic access to tickets via an effective smartphone app (no queues here!), plotting a course through the varied programme strands couldn't be more straightforward, the breadth of choice exemplified at the final awards ceremony, where films as disparate as Gust Van den Berghe's Mexican experimenta, *Lucifer* and Veronika Franz and Severin Fiala's delectably nasty genre workout, *Goodnight Mommy*, took home the Jury and Audience prizes respectively. Of course, with over 340 films playing, decisions need to be made. Does one try to catch a little of everything, a handful of films from each of the programme strands? Or does one choose a couple of sections and comprehensively work one's way through? Two phenomenal 35mm retrospectives of neglected auteurs proved impossible to ignore, so we opted for the second approach, filling any gaps in our four-a-day schedule with the most irresistible of the Croisette tentpoles.

Of the latter, two films stood out not just at New Horizons, but in the year's cinema-going as a whole. The first film in eight years from the inimitable Hou Hsiao-Hsien, *The Assassin* proved an achingly poetic marvel of genre distillation. Ostensibly the filmmaker's first foray into wuxia territory, its (at first glance, anyway) narrative opacity a means of ineluctable surrender

to a symphonic coalescence of sound and movement. Hou's exquisite craftsmanship transcends mere aesthetic prettification, each formal element ravishingly synthesised into a mise-en-scène seemingly touched by a higher power.

One couldn't get further afield from the micro-callibrations of *The Assassin* than Miguel Gomes' sprawling state-of-the-nation address, *Arabian Nights*. With a running time of almost six-and-a-half hours (split into three volumes), it's a monumental achievement by any standards – as staggering in the scope of its ambition as it is beguiling, perplexing and surprising moment by moment. Myth, satire, social realism and untold lyricism – Gomes' continues to prove his mastery at slaying with a pop song – all are folded into the structural architecture of its densely allusive tapestry depicting the power and necessity of storytelling.

If we approached the Philippe Garrel retrospective (a complete round-up of which can be found at [littlewhitelies.co.uk](http://littlewhitelies.co.uk)) with a degree of familiarity, the curator contextualisations before each screening proved invaluable. The biggest revelation of our trip, however, came as part of the Lithuanian cinema strand, with the complete works of Šarūnas Bartas playing chronologically. Rarely seen outside of the festival circuit, Bartas' glacial features remain tough propositions – all the more reason to indulge in the big screen experience. Elementally-charged and largely (for the first six, at least) dialogue-free, his characters drift through the cramped interiors and hostile open spaces of a post-Soviet wasteland. At his best (*Few of Us*), exteriorising the apocalyptic ennui of psychological interiors in long, mournful close-ups, contrapuntally isolated within vast Herzogian landscapes, Bartas' pulse-slowing rhythms mark a visual poetry of chilling beauty and cynical despair that flows as frostily as the ice-packed rivers that invariably open his films. A difficult customer, but one welcomed with open arms at a terrific festival packed with those ready to take on the challenge 🍷

# The Haunted Mansion



- DIRECTED BY -

*Rob Minkoff*

- STARRING -

*Eddie Murphy  
Terence Stamp  
Jennifer Tilly*

- TRAILERS -

*Police Academy 8: Saddam or Bust! That Darn Cat's Epcot Adventure, War & Pizza, The Dwindling Clairvoyant*

- CHERRYPICK -

*"Is that the sofa from 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea you have in your Tiki Room?"*

- TAGLINE -

*'It has a living room . . . And a dying room.'*

- RELEASED -

2003

*The author would like to thank the IMDb User Reviews section, of whose entries this review is compiled.*

The Haunted Mansion, huh? Making rides into movies, huh? Only Disney, with its famous theme rides, could get away with this. Can you imagine making an entire film set on a ferris wheel in a shopping centre parking lot? Would have made a good Warhol film. The words cliché, predictable and tiresome don't even begin to describe my thoughts as I shook my head again and again at the drill that was being thrust into my brain. Sometimes I just want to relax with a mindless movie. Not all movies have to make you think. This movie definitely did not make me think. The hour and a half I sat there, I did not have to stress about things like work, bills, ex-wife, etc... It brought me to a comfortable state of non-thought. But it's not bad enough to make little kids cry.

As president of the unofficial Haunted Mansion Fan Club, one would think that I could scrounge up even a little bit of love for this movie. I even have a copy of the limited soundtrack of the entire ride, as well as the other "Haunted" houses at Disney parks worldwide. If any of you have been to the attraction either in Florida (the best version), Paris (the scariest version - although it's not as scary as similar horror attractions in the Copenhagen area where I live) or California (I haven't been there yet), you will note that throughout the film, the resemblance of the mansion was uncanny, not a mistake to be seen. But from reading, this plot is more based on a ride in EuroDisney (tm) called the Phantom Manor, so I may have my questions answered there.

I put off seeing this movie because I believed a few poorly negative reviews and a poorly analysed bad review from a friend. Recently, this

movie was recommended by a seven year old that I am related too and I thought, 'Well why not?' and watched the movie before I left for work that evening. I thought, here is the chance to satisfy my bizarre and difficult-to-quench movie cravings! As a professional Goth/Macabre/Erotica author, anything chilling, romantically tragic and down right elegantly creepy is right up my alley. It OPENS with two suicides. Ha ha ha ha ha ha haaaaaaa!

In this fun-filled event, a guy named Jim Evers (Murphy) took his family to a mansion. He is a money-grubbing real estate man with his wife who takes his unloved family to the mansion and hilarity ensues. The plot was so simplistic and done a thousand times. A guy, in this case a ghost, wants his long lost love back, who he thinks is reincarnated as Jim Evers' wife. He believes she committed suicide back in the day. Also features an entertaining performance by a barbershop quartet (the singing concrete men). Maybe a talking animal could have helped this movie, but I doubt it.

The plot was very thin (pardon the pun) and the rip offs quite evident. This is without doubt THE worst film ever made and I have seen Faust. I mean it was racist; it was about a black real estate family being defeated by all those ghosts and stuff how can this movie be considered Disney??? I'd rather watch "SCHTOOPIDBABIES: BABY RETARDS DOO" in title repeat on my DVD player than watch this pile of tripe, seriously!!!! However, I have seen this movie over 100 times and I do love it. Rent the DVD and see if you like Haunted Mansion for yourself. If it does not please you maybe your kids will like it if you have any 🍿



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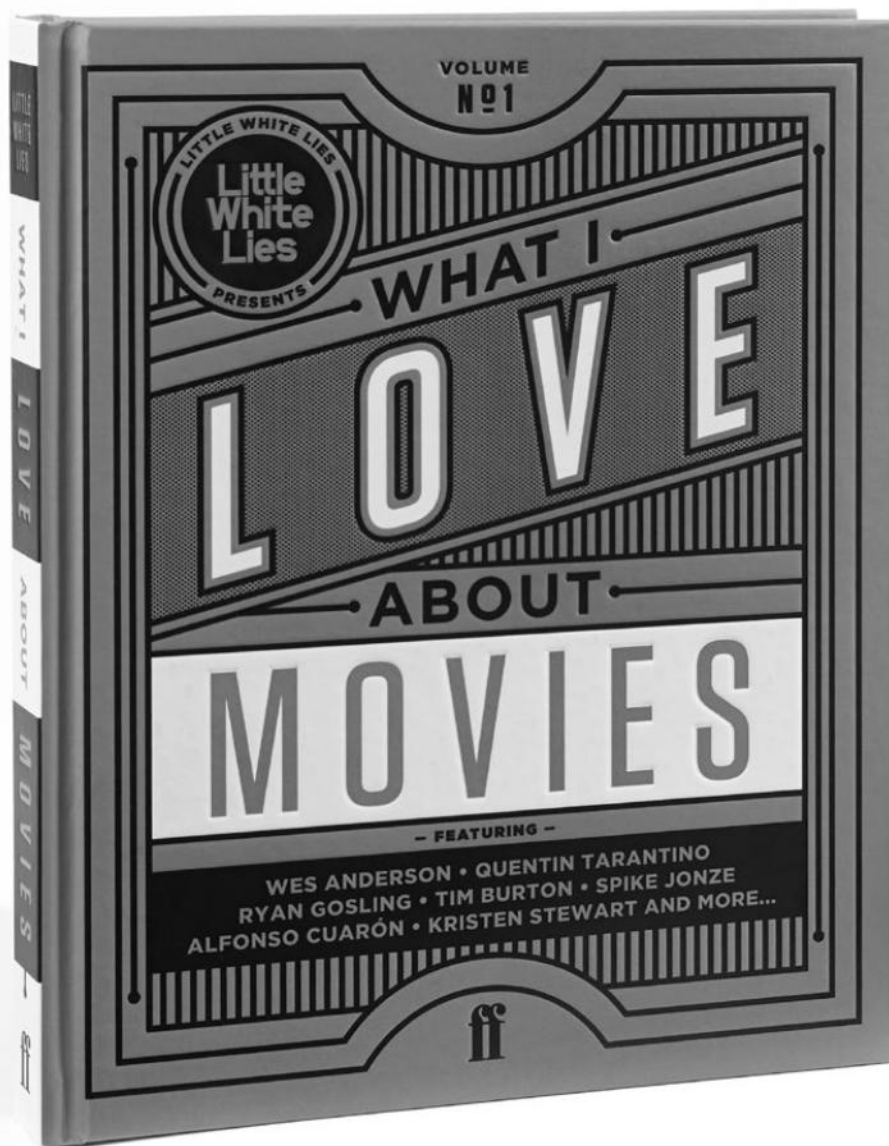
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- Published BY -

The Church of London Publishing  
31A Leonard Street, London EC2A 4QS  
+44 (0) 207 32 33 635 tcoulondon.com  
Publisher: Vince Medeiros.

- Distributed BY -

COMAG SPECIALIST - TAVISTOCK WORKS, Tavistock  
road, west Drayton, Middlesex UB7 9QX  
andy.hounslow@comag.co.uk

Cover BY | - ISSN -  
Dan Mumford | 1745 - 9168

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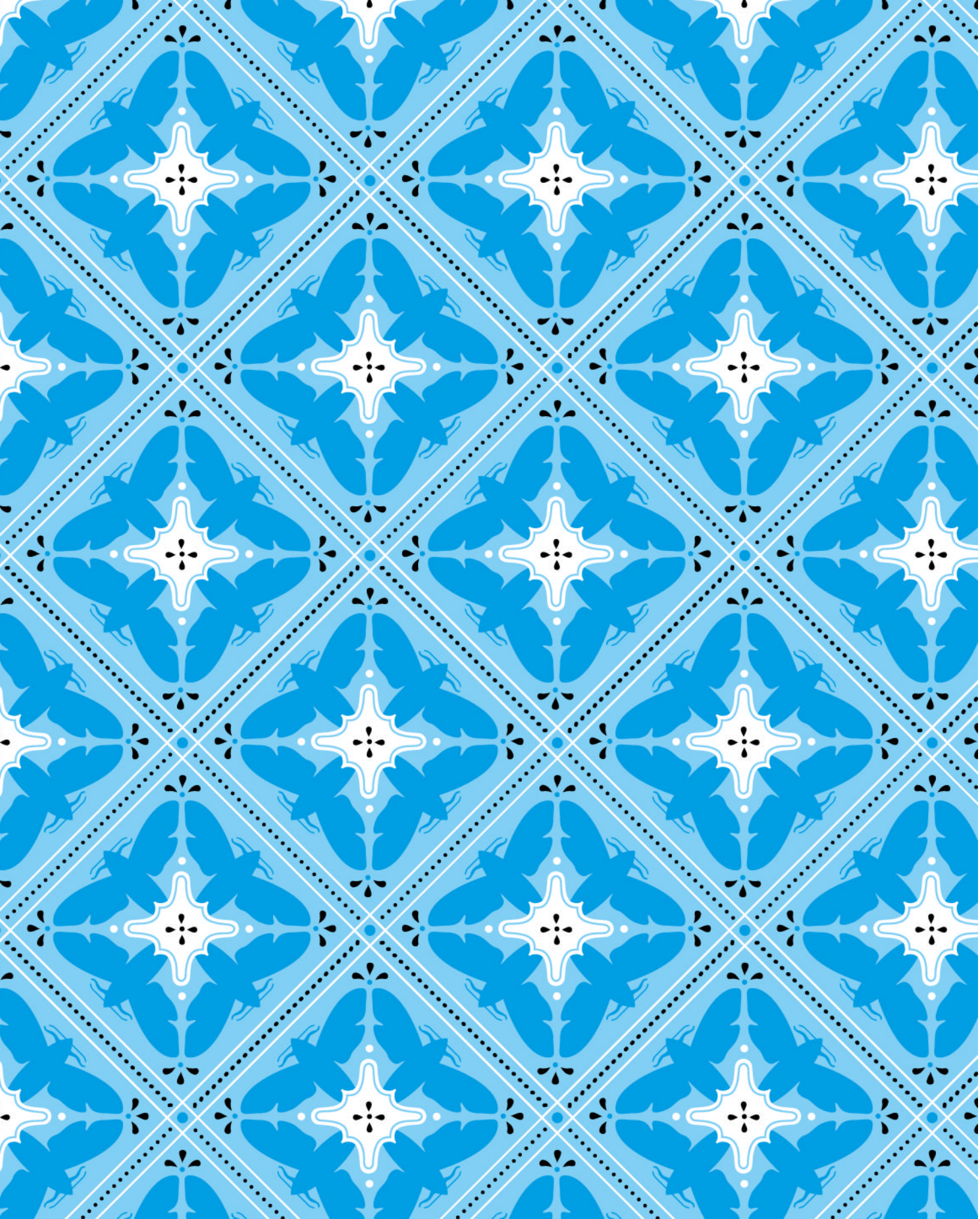
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